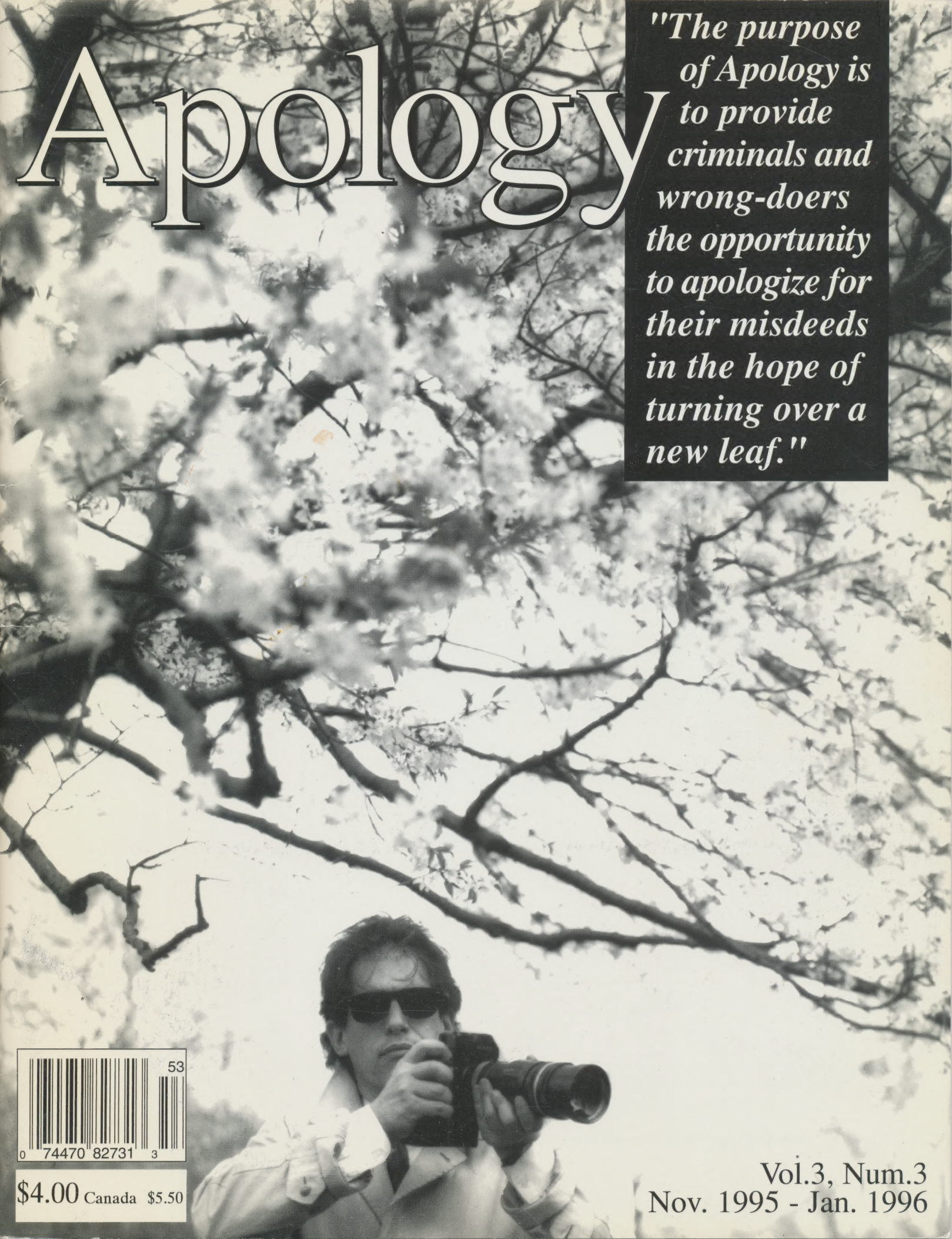
Apology

"The purpose of Apology is to provide criminals and wrong-doers the opportunity to apologize for their misdeeds in the hope of turning over a new leaf."



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Apology

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Apology Magazine Memorial Issue Vol. 3, No. 3

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An Apology Magazine Tribute to Mr. Apology

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On August 5, 1995, Allan Bridge was struck by a jet ski and drowned while SCUBA diving off Southampton, Long Island. He was 50 years old. For the last fifteen of those 50 years Bridge ran a free, confessional telephone service from his Manhattan apartment, under the pseudonym of Mr. Apology. The Apology Project was an extraordinary, continuing work of conceptual art. At this time, we are revealing Mr. Apology's identity in the hope that Allan Bridge will finally receive some well-deserved public recognition.

LISTENING POST — *Mr. Apology*

This magazine is an outgrowth of the ***Apology Line***, so it would be best to start with that. The *Apology Line* started out in 1980 as an idea for an art project: **Gather and play back recorded testimony by criminals and wrongdoers.** Certainly the intention was to gather sensational material to make an exciting art piece. But there were also social purposes: (a) The audience would be exposed to expressions ordinarily censored, buried, and de-legitimized by society. (b) The audience might gain some insight into the workings of their own "antisocial" thought and behavior. (c) The process would provide a way for a wrongdoer to apologize for a misdeed without jeopardy, and this might help such a person to make a change in his or her life. (Prior to conceiving of the *Apology Line* I had a long history of shoplifting, and a confession I made as part of an art piece seemed to help me stop that troubling criminal behavior. *Apology* was conceived as a way of offering others a way to make a protected confession to the public.)

Testimony was gathered by setting up a telephone line with an answering machine. Posters were put up around New York City with this challenge: "Attention Criminals. Get your misdeeds off your chest. Call *Apology*...." Thousands of calls came in. The playback of gathered material took place in several art venues, beginning in 1981 at the *New Museum* in New York.

However, by this time it had become apparent from its acceptance by the general public that *Apology* filled a hitherto unrecognized social need that of providing a means for confession outside of religion or state. Since the idea was now out there, I could have moved on and left it to fate. That would have been the usual thing for an artist to have done. But I had never experienced an activity as rewarding in terms of satisfying intellectual curiosities and emotional needs both for myself and the participants or audience. So rather than terminate the project, made it more direct and self-sufficient by playing the participants' statements back directly over the telephone line. This ended the dependence on art institutions as a place for playback.

Perhaps the continuance of the *Apology* project past the time of playback in art spaces ended its (already arguable) claim as art. Or perhaps the fact that it continues on in a non-commercial mode of operation "untainted" by art career goals gives it a certain purity as an art project. Take your pick. But I think I can safely say that *Apology* was the first-ever telephone confession line and that it was—and it remains—the only one free of commercialism. I *confess* I do hope some day to profit by this new magazine, my objectives are to be able to devote myself full-time to the overall project, and to continue to keep the *Apology Line* free.

The *Apology Line* is much more than just confessions and apologies. Actual apologies have always constituted just a small portion of the calls. From the very beginning callers have mostly used the line to open up the lonely hidden-away recesses of their identities—to reveal secret activities or thoughts or fixations or obsessions or yearnings. Calling anonymously to say, "This is who I am" or "This is what I do that I can't tell anyone"—in a sense using the line as a surrogate for significant others perceived as unaccepting or severely judgemental. This leads to the conjecture that ***at its essence Apology is about those aspects of our lives that we normally hide:*** the numerous embarrassing or shame-ridden aspects of ourselves we hide out of fear, as well as those aspects that we wisely hide until we are in a zone of protected expression. Things like our sexual preferences and activities in all their particulars; or anything having to do with the passing of solid, liquid, or gaseous waste; or our varied personal defects and shortcomings; or the deceptions and frauds we live by and depend upon; or our feelings of inadequacy and self-loathing; or our bottled-up feelings of anger and hatred toward individuals and groups.

Various arguments can be made that these things are better left unpublished: *Such things are unpleasant and distasteful and we get too much of them in the media already.* Fair enough. *To publish such things panders to voyeurism.* That may be the case, but given the subject matter, it is unavoidable. And why shouldn't we look? *You are exploiting desperate people with serious problems.* Participation is voluntary and anonymous; and perhaps some will be helped or made to feel less alone. *If you let a criminal apologize anonymously, he'll be freed of the burden of guilt feelings and be more comfortable about committing new crimes.* I say he will be exchanging a vague gnawing feeling of guilt for a clearer realization and acceptance of guilt. Even if he pretends not to care. *Social order cannot be maintained without repression and redirection of basic animalistic urges.* No doubt, but I suspect you are high on the food chain. Tell you what, I'll repress my urges, and you repress yours.

Simply put, the intention is to pursue the truths of who we are so we can have a fuller picture of human nature, be more accepting of it, and make better and fairer judgements about it.

Apology Magazine will be an expression of these ideas in text and graphics. Some of the very best material heard over the years on the *Line* will be transcribed here. The *Magazine* and the *Line* will compliment and enhance each other. Some readers

will become callers, and some of the most interesting recorded testimony will become part of what will become a print archive of the secret life of Americans.

Furthermore, it will be the policy of this magazine to invite artists and other denizens of the forbidden zones to contribute personal statements, stories, photographs, cartoons and drawings for possible inclusion. At this early stage no compensation other than complimentary copies of the magazine can be offered for things used, but we will be pleased to accredit your contribution to your name or alias. If you are an established artist, photographer, or writer, you may have work you wouldn't publish under your professional name. This may be the place for it. To those of you already familiar with the *Apology Line*, we invite you to send in drawings or cartoon strips related to what you hear. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you desire the return of material.

There is an announcement on the *Apology Line* that statements become the copyrighted property of *Apology* and may be published here or in other media. This frees me to publish the recordings creatively and also to permit journalists to use them (which in turn serves to publicize *Apology*). In regard to mailed-in submissions to this magazine, I reserve the right to use the material in the magazine or in reprints in other publications about Apology. I don't wish to interfere with the right of the author or artist to republish the piece elsewhere. •

The veracity of a particular *Apology* statement often comes into question. The shield of anonymity permits the telling of painful truths and the admission of wrongdoing, but it also creates the temptation to put over a deception. This is the price of protected expression. (Of course, deceptions also occur with unprotected speech for the opposite reason: Fear of punishment or public humiliation causes people to withhold the truth or even risk perjury.) If a deception is spotted, a hidden side of the deceiver is revealed. Since exposure of "hidden sides" is what *Apology* is all about, the publication of an apparent fantasy or obvious falsehood has its place. Unfortunately many fascinating statements are not obviously true or false. So it is hoped that statements can still be appreciated as imaginative and revealing expressions when they do not have the ring of absolute truth. In any case there is rarely enough factual information to verify a statement recorded anonymously on the *Apology Line*.

The Apology Project Headquarters, a room in Allan Bridge' s Manhattan loft.

In Memoriam...

We asked friends, relatives, colleagues and Apology Line listeners to write or say a few words about Allan for inclusion in this special memorial issue. The response was gratifying, and we would like to thank everyone for participating.

The Apology Line

"The Zodiologist"
Apology Line Caller

The Apology Line was founded in October 1980 by an anonymous New York artist "as a way for criminals and wrongdoers to apologize for their misdeeds in the hope of turning over a new leaf." The Line was a direct lineal descendent of the conceptual and performance artists of the late 1970's, the Fluxist and Happening artworks, and artists such as Les Levine, Dennis Oppenheim, Chris Burden, Hans Haacke et. al....but with a difference. Far from involving the spectator/participant in an artwork focusing on aesthetic (read meaningless) activity, the Apology Line asked callers to confess to actual behavior...good or ill. Originally the messages were played back in museum and gallery settings, but the anonymous sponsor of the Line realized that many of the participants of the Line would not be able or willing to hear the playback of their own and others' confessions in such forums, and engineered a system of program playback and an invitation to record confessions.

These were the days of the Phone Freeks. The commercial availability of the answering machine allowed many lines to be set up (In the New York area the most notable were the Creation Line, Ralphie's Bop City and the Kook Line), but few lasted. None had the aesthetic and visceral impact of the Apology Line. Mr. Apology had many personal encounters with callers. Some were hoaxes (Mea Culpa). Some were mundane. But after a time, the artist began responding to specific callers. Callers took on identities. Other callers began responding to them. Mr. Apology began responding to the responses. The programs got longer.

(continued on page 8)

The Pre-Apology Years

Larry Bridge, Father

ALLAN'S EARLIER YEARS

In 1945, when our second son Allan was born, in Washington, DC, Dr. Murphy jovially told Kate "Well, you have a boy!" Kate cried "but I wanted a girl!" and Dr. Murphy said "I did it again!" However the disappointment was soon replaced by whole-hearted acceptance.

An obvious feature of Allan's pre-school years were his talent in art and his spatial cognizance. When drawing a full-length figure, he would start at the toe and work his way up and arrive at a well-proportioned drawing. He also showed a great ability to describe what previously-folded-and-cut sheets would look like when unfolded. His pre-high school years were taken up with school, art classes, cub and boy scouts.

High school days were made up of good grades, accompanied by his ability to also lead a small group of socially-rebellious kids, and his love of weapons. He literally was the greatest expert on weapons—as authoritative as any Secretary of Defense. Given his lack of resources, he spent most of his free time making cannons, crossbows, and black powder. He made larger and larger cannons, and more and more powerful black powder. Frequently, after volleys, the cannons' mouths looked like corrugated pipes. We were finding caches of black powder stuffed into the rafters of our basement and attic. Following a suggestion of a friend trained in psychology, we bought a. 22-caliber target rifle, a professional bow and arrow, and joined the Isaac Walton League in Manassas, Virginia. Allan did use the rifle range and bow and arrow trail with the rest of us—but, when he could get away from us, took the rifle into the woods and fired at anything that moved. He did buy a shotgun and became a hunter in his New York years. He also kept a pellet gun at his side in his office and told me he winged a mouse from time to time.

Allan was a failed scientist. He started to study science at the University of Chicago. At the end of his first freshman week, the physics instructor announced that he was going to give an exam, and strongly advised anyone not doing well in the exam to change to another subject. A week later, Allan became a fine arts candidate. After receiving a degree in fine arts from the University of Chicago and pursuing a masters at American University in Washington, DC, Allan tried to bring science into art. He did a serigraph illustrating Einstein's Special Relativity, a drawing "Introduction to Quantum Theory," and an ambitious attempt, using carefully weighed mixtures of three colors of paint, to make a topographical map of the ocean bottom where the viewer could three dimensionally distinguish slopes, shapes and heights of structural features. Well, after many, many days of using a slide rule and a sensitive balance scale to solve trigonometric functions and to exactly weigh the three pigments, Allan completed the painting and left physics for the second time.

Allan was an activist during the Vietnam period. He himself was deferred due to a problem with his spleen. He engaged in many anti-war protests. He was generally in the middle of "trashing" incidents. Perhaps, he enjoyed them too

much, until his leg was broken while being dragged by the Washington, DC police during an arrest.

Allan's "Formal" Art Years

After his art studies, Allan settled in Washington, DC. He rented a large apartment in a building named Beverly Courts and started his studio. He convinced his landlord to attract other young artists, and in a short time was joined by eight other artists. This group, which included painters, photographers, a silk-screen printer, and a conceptual sculptor, gave a very successful show, *Artists of Beverly Court* in 1973. From the early to late '70s, Allan's major activity was as a painter and sculptor in Washington, DC. In 1977, he married his first wife, Elinor Schiele, and shortly thereafter moved to New York, following many other artists who were leaving the Washington art scene. His marriage to Elinor was short-lived, ending in an amicable divorce. He married his present wife, Marissa Waichunas, an artist, in 1984.

His art sales, however, were limited and his major source of income was as a cabinet maker, a construction contractor, and to a lesser extent a self-trained electronics worker. He was quite skilled in all of the mechanical arts, woodworking, and in the various construction fields. He used his skills in electronics as the person in charge of keeping moving picture cameras in operation during the making of an underwater film in the Caribbean. He also built the motorized platforms that propelled the cameramen and cameras underwater. As a construction contractor, he built many loft apartments, and other projects, showing his skills in plumbing, carpentry, electrical systems, and cabinetry. A prize example of his cabinetry skills was building a spiral library ladder, requiring the difficult skill of curving wood panels.

His earliest paintings were largely of human figures and portraits. including several self-portraits. Then he joined the Washington "color" school pioneered by Morris Louis, using acrylic paint on canvases treated with detergents. He went through many stages, varying from poured paint to "hard edge" painting, frequently of trompe l'oeil and geometric patterns. Early on, he began experimenting with hexagonal forms, largely filled with cube constructions. Allan then began spinning his hexagonal figures into more complex shapes, then developing "looser" shapes, and his work became more and more forms of expressionist abstracts. When his work was shown in 1974, when Allan was 29, in a Washington show called *A Year of Transition*. The Washington Post critic said: "Great colorists improve with age. Bridge's paintings...have steadily increased in beauty."

After several one-artist shows and many group shows in the '70s, Allan largely put painting aside. He did do some sporadic painting and received a sizable commission in the late '80s from a Japanese gallery for five paintings. He began to work on conceptual sculptures. In 1977, he exhibited his "Mortality Machines." These consist of Plexiglas boxes mounted on wooden pedestals. Each of the boxes contains an upper chamber holding about 100 pounds of marbles. The lower chambers contain neat, easy-to-look-at conglomerations of gears, clocks, solenoids, springs, levers, and traps that determine the various ways in which the marbles are released. These five machines represent the many stages of life that humans go through before death, which occurs when the last marble falls into the lower chamber of the machines; the machines can never function again after the last marble falls. The machines represent work ("Work/No Effort, No Function"), cooperation with others ("Cooperation/Simultaneity"), gestation ("Gestation/Frustration") and even suicide ("Self Destruction"). In the last case, if attention is not paid and a conscious action not taken in a given period of time, the entire batch of marbles will fall all at once into the bottom chamber.

Quoting a Washington Post critic of this show: "We've been waiting for these machines for years, ever since a chunk of Washington's art world decided that Allan Bridge was some kind of genius. Mad? Unsung? Evil? Frustrated? His recent painting seemed aimed at cornering a smaller aesthetic market. But the machines no longer trade on promise."

Introducing his Mortality Machines to the public, Allan wrote: "As a boy I formed the central conviction of my life: that individual consciousness dies with the body (brain). Although the widespread beliefs in reward and punishment after death may have some positive effect on human conduct, I think humaneness might increase if we simply accepted the brevity of individual life and focused on ways to make life on earth a more pleasant and relaxed experience for all.

"My machines confront the viewer with the issue of mortality and the sub-issues of how we use our limited time, energy, opportunities, significant relationships, and resources."

Allan, never oblivious to the crime around him, also made a similar construction entitled "If You Can't Do the Time, Don't Do the Crime." In this machine, one put his hand into a cuff-like hole in the lower chamber and spun a wheel. Randomly, the cuff would either tighten around one's wrist and hold tightly for a short period or, if "innocent," dispense a marble into the palm of one's hand. •

Allan at 13, no doubt thinking of what to blow up next.

(continued from page 6)

In the 1990's phone entertainment became a profitable medium, as telephone sex lines proliferated. The artist resisted the temptation of easy profit and in the face of this onslaught actually expanded the program, moving to a software-based voice messaging system. In its latest incarnation, the Apology Line encompassed such diverse subjects as the Confession Booth, Sex, Gay Issues, Crime, Hatred, Substance Abuse, Child Abuse, the infamous Apology Pet Corner, a General Category, and a discussion of faith and non-faith called the Church of the Apologetic Predator. The artist played back and responded to the calls with equanimity, kindness, good advice, and above all, grace.

The success of the Apology Project, and its continuation in the face of the death of the prime mover, may be best left to others better qualified. I think it worked. It worked because, unlike its counterparts, it always focused on the real concerns of real people, and never slid into didacticism or the myth of the perpetual avant-garde. The triumph and the lesson of the Apology Line to me will be that honesty always overcomes artifice, and that, to survive as people, we must always be wild and brave and free. Mr. Apology taught us that if we say what we feel no one can hurt us, no matter what.

Om shanti, pal. I'm gonna miss you. I'll never forget. •

Dear Mrs. Apology and Family

"C.D."
Apology Line Caller

It will be a massive understatement for me to just say I am sorry.

It was a great privilege for me to interact with Mr. Apology. I give you and your family credit for allowing a great deal of time to be dedicated to helping strangers and making many lives better.

I went by the initials C.D. on the Line. Mr. Apology and his loyal callers may have been the catalyst to saving my life. When I heard the announcement I felt an enormous amount of guilt. I wished to God to trade my life for his. Mr. A has helped so many. It was callous for God to take him from us. I really wish I could trade my life for his. I will really miss him.

Please take care. •

Mother's Remembrance

Kate Bridge

Our son had passed his fiftieth birthday when the fatal accident occurred but my memories insist on starting the day he was born, and when the nurse brought in an infant in the palm of one hand and said, "Look at this fellow, he is already sucking his finger." I didn't know it was such an important feat, but it did point to an appetite that was difficult to satisfy with small amounts—until he finally reached close to six feet at age fourteen.

Allan was born near the end of World War Two. My husband worked in the US Government and we had just moved to a quiet, new development in southeast Washington, DC. Allan and his fourteen-month older brother, Raymond, shared a bedroom where each child was preoccupied with toys suited to his age. I don't ever remember the need to scold, reprimand, or to "bring up" Allan. He was a happy child.

When Allan was barely three years of age and in the pre-school nursery, the teacher, Mrs. O'Connor, said: "Your boy has drawn a very interesting picture. It has little men crawling along a corridor with lamps attached to their foreheads. Where did he see it?" I told her my husband reads to the boys every evening and one of the children's books is about coal miners. The child has talent, she remarked.

When the boys were six and seven I drove them to a private art school on Saturday afternoons. One day, the teacher asked me why I hadn't attended the public show of the children's art work, and added that a woman bought Allan's clay model of a rabbit; but not to worry, as Allan was already doing a marble piece from memory. I made sure that it wasn't sold. We own the white rabbit which sits comfortably on a shelf in the etagere. Allan worked on it off and on until it was done to his satisfaction.

Another life-size animal that Allan made was a jaguar, the high school's mascot. It was painted on plywood and hung in all its majesty above the portals of the high school for many, many years until the building was demolished.

Among the memorabilia relating to the boys I had saved over the years, I found the grades on two Scholastic Aptitude tests taken in the tenth and eleventh grades by Allan. He scored outstanding in mathematics, science, and social studies. Not as good in "listening" and handwriting. The total showed "about zero out of 10 students are higher." He was elected editor of the high school publication in his last year, incidentally, replacing his older brother who had graduated.

Allan's second favorite pastime when he was in his early teens was snorkeling, and as he got older, SCUBA diving. When my husband was working on a special project for the Venezuelan government, Allan spent the summer with us before entering college. One day at the beach, with his flippers, his snorkel and a sharpened spear, Allan left the picnic and guests at the shore and plunged into the ocean. He disappeared from view at this unfamiliar rocky beach for some 45 minutes. Finally, he appeared with a sizable fish on his spear. He did admit to some frightening moments when surrounded by large barracudas.

In an earlier incident when Allan was thirteen, his father was a visiting economist at the Merrill Center of Economics in Southampton, Long Island. We decided to make it a vacation by renting some rooms near Shinnecock Inlet. Snorkeling became the boys' favorite pastime.

One day as storm clouds spread across the sky, an alarm siren began to wail while a voice came over the loud speaker, "All boats return to shore! Swimmers return to shore!" The boys (age thirteen and fourteen) were snorkeling and out of sight. As I watched the boats and some of the snorkelers return, I could not see our boys. Raymond showed up and told me Allan had joined a group of older boys and he lost sight of them. Finally, among the older swimmers I detected Allan's head. He was alive but weary. This was the fortunate ending at Shinnecock Inlet for Allan—never did I dream this Inlet would claim him after all on an afternoon in August, 1995. •

Marissa Bridge

Wife

Nursery School Graduation, at the top of Mrs. O'Connor's Class.

The one thing I never thought I'd have to do was write some words about my husband, Allan, for publication in his magazine after his death. It was eight weeks ago today that he died, and I have felt every minute of those weeks ticking slowly by. There is a feeling in me of utter loss and devastation, an internal and seemingly eternal aching in my guts that I'm afraid will never go away.

But I'm writing this because I have some answers to the question, "Who was Mr. Apology?"

I met Allan S. Bridge in November 1980, a few weeks after he started the Apology Line. We met in Prescott's, a bar in Tribeca that was a hangout for artists in those days. Allan was with his friend, Yuri Schwebler, a sculptor who was rooming with him. I was with a friend from art school, Robin Kappy.

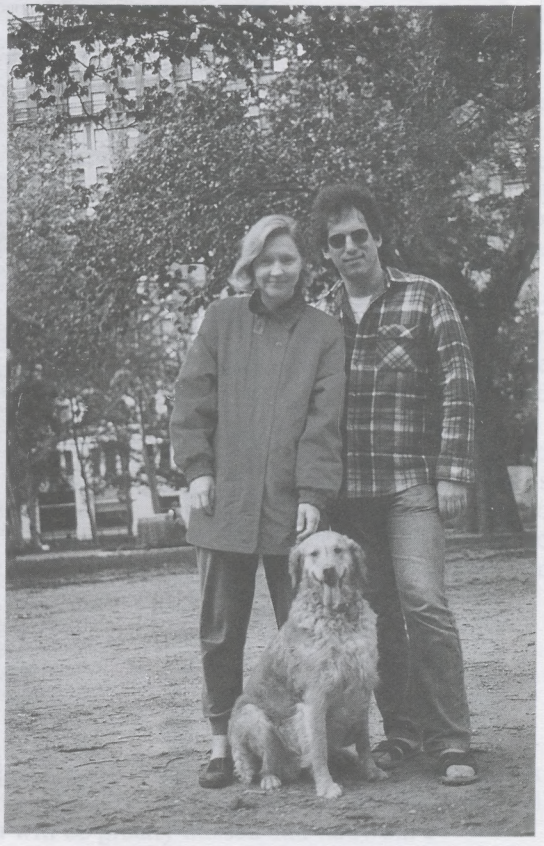
He asked me to dance. I said no, but we talked all night. He enthusiastically spoke about this new art project he had just started involving the telephone, and I talked about the paintings I was doing at the time. We each realized we had found somebody special, and we were together permanently from that night on. Last August 5th, 1995, Allan didn't return from a SCUBA diving trip, and our life together was suddenly over.

In the time in between those events, we got married, traveled by boat and plane to exotic dive sites, and dedicated our lives to making art and making a living in New York City.

Allan became known as Mr. Apology, first name Chris, early on in the project. He felt strongly that anonymity was important for him and the Apology Line callers to maintain for two reasons. The first was because he received threats from some of the early callers. The second was that he believed people would open up and be more truthful on the Line if they were confident no one who listened knew who they were.

The presence of truthfulness in the callers to the Line was a primary concern for him. He often studied and contemplated certain callers' messages for days, wondering if they were telling the truth, or making up some story to amuse themselves or protect themselves. Sometimes he found out. Jim, the Zodiologist, confessed to making up a persona, and later said his confession had made him a better person. As Mr. Apology, Allan spoke several times to the mother of Jumpin' Jim, a disturbed young man who had "confessed" to killing his mother. Other times, as in the case of Richie, a self-described serial killer that Allan spoke to at length over the space of a few years, he never knew for certain.

Allan, Marissa and Tahnee in the park.



This desire to maintain an environment where truthful confession would be possible was the main reason Allan never developed the Apology Line into a 900 number, a money-earning venture. When he began the Line, there was no such thing, of course, and since he ran it as an art project the thought of charging people for calling the Line never occurred to him. Artists are used to devoting their lives to the development of an art form that may never make money for them. It's part of the price society expects them to pay for not fitting into the correct capitalist mold. Allan cheerfully paid the price. Later on, he saw the 900 "confession lines" come and go, and he knew from calling them that the reason they didn't last was because people used them strictly for entertainment and sexual titillation. There was no truth to be had on those lines. They did not have their Mr. Apology to guide them along.

However, money was an issue for him, and for us. When I first knew Allan, he was one of the better artist-carpenters around, a fine craftsman who could get as much work as he needed doing contracting or cabinet making. He modeled that part of his personality on a book he read in childhood entitled *The Boy Mechanic*. Allan's knowledge ranged from color mixing to electronics, and he knew how to fix almost

anything. As the years went on, however, he did carpentry less and less. His back collapsed on him a few times, and he discovered he had arthritis of the spine. At that point, he began devoting more and more time to various projects related to Apology that he hoped would bring him some fortune, if not fame.

His parents, Kate and Larry Bridge, were always there to help him, and to support him, whenever he really needed it. His father seemed to have a sixth sense about it. Although they wished us to have a more normal life, and to have children, they knew the work Allan was doing was original and important. They never suggested that he do otherwise with his time, although I know they secretly worried about how we would get by in the future. The issue of children, to have or not to have them, was one Allan and I were working on finding an answer to at the time of his death. Now there is no time for them, because he is gone.

Looking back on our lives with the short perspective of two months, I need to believe that all the sacrifices we made were worth it. I think only time will tell if Allan is given the recognition from society that he deserves. He created a new art form, yet because he operated outside of the art gallery system, his historical importance has yet to be recognized. But his work touched the lives of thousands of people from all over the world who called in to hear what their brethren were saying on the Apology Line. Over the years, he personally helped many of them "turn over a new leaf." He earned the respect of many of his colleagues in the media, and the love of his dear friends and family. This is an amazing legacy to leave behind.

For me, though, the biggest realization I've had is that I lived with a great man, a special and beautiful person, who I was privileged to know intimately for almost fifteen years. He always used to say "The prophet has no honor in his own land." And it's true. I did not know on a day-to-day basis that I was living with greatness. I took him for granted, for a given in my life, because he was always there, constant, faithful, forever sitting in his computer room listening to calls or writing texts. Always sitting in his chair, the one I am sitting in now, while I write this.

I knew Allan was brilliant, probably a genius, but mostly he was my husband, someone I fought with, admired, worried about, and loved. I know I didn't give him all the respect he deserved, and for that I apologize. I tried to do the best I could in our life together, and I know he knows that, and that he forgives me for my shortcomings, because he is in heaven, and he is Mr. Apology.

Everything about who I am is connected to Allan because he showed me THE WAY. That is, he showed me how to be an artist and survive in NYC. He taught me how to SCUBA dive, how to use a jig saw, how to pilot a boat, be original, work hard, have fun, look at everything in a new way. I was a young person when I met him, and now I'm almost middle aged. I never thought I'd have to do life without him. But because he encouraged me to think for myself and become an independent person, I know I can do it, although I don't want to. As long as he is with me, I'll make it, because what we had together is the fuel that will keep me going into the future.

Allan: Tahnee and I will always keep a warm spot open for you in our hearts. Farewell until we meet again on the other side. We love you forever. •

Carl Goldhagen, Marissa, Allan and "Caspar," circa 1982.

Gregory Fleeman

Friend

Washington, DC, Fall, 1969. I was just starting classes at the American University. I went to visit my friend Maggie Roth and found her living in an apartment on Connecticut Ave. She had this strange boyfriend—a mad artist type named Allan Bridge. I hung around their apartment a lot—it was quite a homey place, and I felt, uh, accepted there. Eventually, Maggie moved on, and I continued hanging out with Allan. He became one of my closest friends. (Cheap irony abounds—it is now 25 years later, and I am living on the West Coast—the person who informed me of Allan's death was David Best—another mad artist type who happens to be Maggie Roth's husband. Wacky world, ain't it?)

Allan's apartment was a sort of gathering place for people in the art scene in DC at the time. Lots of interesting folk hung out there—Yuri Schwebler, Bob Stark, Allan Appel, Manon Cleary, Jonathan Meader—I felt grateful that they allowed a boring little git like myself to hang out with them. A few moments from that apartment are frozen forever in a special part of my memory...

I used to amuse myself by entering Allan's apartment via the fire escape. One day, I did that—up the fire escape to the third floor, into the window—and was greeted by the sight of Allan, stark naked, aiming a contraption that looked like a rifle-on-a-stand out the window. It turned out to be a giant slingshot that he had built. It fired large ball bearings, and he was in the process of deciding whether or not to take out the window of the bank across the street. We discussed whether or not this would be a good idea. Eventually, we came to the conclusion that it would not. I believe this giant slingshot may have been the first of his rather unusual crime-oriented constructions.

Later, in that same apartment, he built a "painting machine." He was working on a series of very large, non-representational paintings, and he decided the work would go easier if he had a machine to do the actual spraying of the paint. He put up two sawhorses, stretched a rack-of-sorts between them, and rigged a spray-paint gun to travel back and forth over a canvas. The canvases that he was working on at the time, however, were too big to fit in the small rooms in the apartment. Allan solved that problem with his typical pragmatism—he simply cut away the lower part of the wall between two rooms and allowed the canvas (and spray-painting machine) to take up two rooms. He did, however, neglect to inform the landlord of his endeavors. The landlord, needless to say, was not amused. Allan found new lodgings not long after...

Another moment I will never forget is lying with him and a few friends on the rooftop of his building one evening. It was summer and it was in the middle of one of the many political demonstrations that used to erupt in the Dupont Circle area of Washington, DC. We were leaning over the edge of the building, trying to stay out of harm's way, but still curious enough to see who was winning the street, the cops or the freaks. Up on the roof we were able to avoid the tear gas that was an occasional visitor to the area. At one point during the melee, Allan turned to me and said, pretty much out of nowhere, "You know, I'm getting really tired of the visual image." I pointed out to him that this was a very weighty statement for a heretofore almost exclusively visual artist to make. He thought about this for a moment, then nodded his head in agreement. As I write this, I realize there is no point to this "anecdote," but, as I said before, I never forgot it, so it must mean something.

As I moved around the country, I always made it a point to keep in touch with him. Eventually, I ended up in NYC—eventually, so did he, and right in my neighborhood, too! Cool! I would hang out at his house because he had cooler toys than I did. He had Crime Time machines, he started the Apology Line—I remember being so excited the first time a call came into the house while I was there, and I actually heard someone confess, live, in real time! I remember the first public showing (playing) of the Apology Tapes—in some art space on the lower east side; it was part of a group show. Because of the death threats he had received, he decided to attend "in disguise," and managed to get together the lamest excuse for a disguise I have ever seen—a fake beard, for chrissakes. He looked like he was trying to pass for Amish. He would hover "unobtrusively" near the people listening to the Apology Tapes, trying to appear disinterested, but looking, in fact, like a pedophile trolling for unattached children... I stood in the corner, laughing hysterically...

As the Apology Line became more well known, I used him shamelessly to help promote my own fledgling TV News career: "I got a great feature story for you," I would say to one assignment editor after another. "This friend of mine has this weird phone thing going..." I got him on CNN when I worked there, and produced a piece on him for Crime Watch, a TV show that no one remembers.

I remember Allan and Marissa's wedding—one of the great weddings—on a boat circling Manhattan. What a cool idea. How many people can say they've seen the underside of the Brooklyn Bridge?

One thing that always amazed me about Allan was his rare combination of creativity, practicality and discipline. When he wanted to learn carpentry, he just learned it. At one point, in order to facilitate the Apology Line, he just taught himself electronics. You know how people are always saying, "You can do anything if you put your mind to it?" He was one of those rare people who *did.*

Allan was a close friend of mine for over 25 years, and it would be impossible for me to go into everything in detail—how he once stole a girlfriend of mine, but I forgave him because she wouldn't fuck him either. We once traveled across the country together—

Jesus, it's late, and I'm tired. I'm tired and I'm sad and I'm angry. I'm glad forever that I had someone like Allan as such an important part of my life (he built my loft!) for so many years. I'm furious and depressed that I won't get to compare notes with him as I grow old. And I miss him terribly. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

Apologists of fifteen years: I would just like to say to Mr. A, I feel immense sadness at the news of this and, as all will attest, you will be greatly missed and farewell. •

No Apologies

Burkey Belser, Friend

The only way you could get an apartment in that building was for an old person to die. Then, amazingly, all the old people started to accommodate us, dying with remarkable regularity. We'd see their sheet-draped bodies roll out on gurneys once a week.

Manon Cleary got the first apartment, I think. Then, she brought the rest of us in. Suddenly the Beverly Court was filled with artists and unlike any other place in Washington. The apartments were huge—giant two-bedroom spaces for $125/month, which was insane even in 1973. Allan lived on the first floor right by the front door. I was a graphic designer/illustrator and lived across the hallway with a painter, Edwina Smith. A filmmaker, Tom Goodwin, lived next to me. A writer and "painter" of hooked rugs lived just above me. Next to her lived the painter, Gay Glading. Jonathan Meader, a silk-screen artist, lived around the corner. The painter Rebecca Davenport was in there somewhere, too. The Beverly Court became very famous very quickly in Washington art circles.

Artist/photographer/writer Allen Appel had a place down the hall on the first floor with the sculptor, Yuri Schwebler. It was the four of us who found ourselves together most often—usually after midnight when the "day" was over. I'd slip out of my apartment to walk across the hall and find Allan Bridge playing chess with Allen Appel. Yuri was there often enough, but he was crazy, of course, so some part of our evening was spent corralling Yuri. But then we all spent time corralling each other in the Beverly Court. If Yuri was clam, someone would pop across the street for a steak and cheese sub at Lorenzo's. Beer. Jug wine. It was heaven. We were all too young to know whether any of us were any good or not, so nothing much mattered except that we were ambitious together.

Allan's work at the time was a reflection of the same person playing chess with Allen Appel. It was precise, intellectual, true to the late, great Washington color school.

Allan peers into a "Mortality Machine."

Not surprisingly, a canvas couldn't contain his art forever. He was too smart, too probing, too interested in the abstract idea behind the paint.

By the time Allan moved to New York, the electric phenomenon of the "Court" was losing power. I don't think I saw him more than five or six times after that, with decreasing frequency. But it still makes me mad that I won't get to hear his ragged laugh again or watch his lanky frame slouch toward the kitchen for another beer. •

Alice Denney

Friend

I remember Allan Bridge with great admiration. We spent many moments together with Yuri Schwebler in my house and the Washington Project for the Arts. Allan also wanted some work and I had an upstairs sleeping porch I wanted enclosed and he said he would be happy to work on the project.

During that project we had many long discussions about art and particularly about his future ideas about the telephone booth. I encouraged him to explore the possibility even though that conceptual idea would meet with some skepticism in this conservative town. Much to our dismay he moved to New York.

I was stunned to learn of the tragedy and now I have lost two of my favorite artists—Allan and Yuri! •

Robert Stark

Friend

Allan was a friend and neighbor in the early '70s, our loft studios faced each other across Connecticut Avenue in Washington, DC. We exhibited together in open studio exhibitions together with Maggie Roth, Lucy Clark, Enid Sanford, Carrol Sockwell, and Yuri Schwebler on the second floor over the Admiral Ben Bow, an Irish bar where we all hung out. Allan had his first one person show there in 1973, described by Paul Richard in the Washington Post, "This is an encouraging one-man show as I have seen."

In the early '70s Allan was painting large color field abstractions that were so varied that Walter Hopps once characterized his work as "the style of the night." Allan was interested in math and physics and his paintings in his 1973 one-person exhibition Paint Job, incorporated perspective and hue gradations together with the color sensibility of the Washington Color School

Allan was a true artist and a warm and supportive friend. Now that we can look at the man and his life the breath and depth of his genius is clearer, from the early paintings to his Mortality Machines, to his cabinetry, his love of the ocean, his loyalty to his friends and family, and his concern that we are able to ask forgiveness and are able to learn to forgive. •

Allen Appel

Best Friend

Washington, DC. was always too small, dull, and conservative for Allan Bridge. He had to move to New York to find room for his vision.

Allan's art always carried a strong element of participation. At the bright core of every piece was always an idea, conveyed by the medium whether it was painting, sculpture, or conceptual. This intelligence was always tempered by his generous spirit and presented and styled with his great craft.

Twenty-five years ago and before, when he lived and worked in Washington, DC, he was considered a "color school" painter, like many others in this city. But the best of his paintings always carried something extra, something that went beyond the simple idea of pleasing color. Allan's paintings always asked the viewer to participate. The colors and forms, the execution and result might have been lovely, but the way all of these elements worked together or against one another was a theme that made you think and work to puzzle it out.

Sometimes the themes were stated and obvious, as with his series of relativity paintings and silk-screens. Other times the ideas were not so evident.

Standard galleries and art dealers were never very successful with his work, and he was never happy within these confines. Dealers never seemed to understand, or care about the ideas behind his work, looking only for surface beauty and concepts that were easy to sell. This was particularly true when he moved into sculpture with his series of marble machines that presented various dilemmas to the viewer who was encouraged to participate in the art process and become involved with the machines. The idea that a piece of art had a life and at some point was "over" did not sit well in the standard gallery situation.

So Allan moved to New York. We were all sorry to see him go, but it was a decision we understood.

It was there that he found enough room and understanding to think up the Apology project. If it is as true with artists as with scientists, and I believe it is, that most such thinkers only get one great idea in a lifetime, then the Apology Project was Allan's.

In many ways his life was like his art: it invited participation. He was the sweetest, most even-tempered man I ever knew. The only time I heard him raise his voice was when he and I and my eleven-year-old son were trapped in a burning elevator. Even then it was all I could do to get him to join in our yells for help.

And now he's gone and I've lost my best friend. He hated turning 50, and felt that the rest of life would in many ways be a slide into decline. The fact that he had to get bifocals drove him crazy. In some ways he's better off, and he certainly went out doing what he loved. And those of us here, left behind, are much the worst for it. Our lives are not just a little emptier, they're a lot emptier. There's a place in my heart that will never be filled again. •

Allan and Allen standing in front of one of Allan's paintings.

Gay Glading

Friend

Allan's range of perception is fat, broad, long and faceted. The memory sticks in the present case even though he is gone. In the early '70s I found myself sitting in his studio, in class, being taught the rudiments of Einstein's theory of relativity. He was using his paintings as graphic descriptions, pointing to the visual explanation of velocity. The distant reaches of the universe to the darkness in the soul of man—all in a grasp of Allan's masterful touch. •

Letter to Allan's Parents

Harry Liebersohn
Friend

The tragic news about Allan, which my mother called to tell me this morning, saddened me beyond words.

Although I hadn't seen Allan for years, my parents regularly kept me up to date with his doing. I distinctly remember an evening with him from my teenage years. A girlfriend and I visited him in Adams Morgan, where he was living at the time. At a time when he was already a mature artist, he treated us with such gentleness and humor! He exuded a vitality that I still recall with special affection. •

STRICTLY PERSONALS

Elinor Schiele
Allan's First Wife

Madam E —
Enticing British mystic, mystique (mistake)
Wake up Your lost senses
Take a chance Rough Romance
Now there's no need to wait
Feel good Forever young Savor it.
Voyage on a wave
Let me be your muse on that cruise
You'll never forget
Versatile touch Velvet Vamp
No Taboos (or tattoos)
Stress relief in the world of relax
Plush locations Caribbean sunlight
Float on a cloud Real fabulous Fantasies
Discreet very very sage Delicious
Dive to new depths of desire
Escape to the perfect Paradise of pleasures
Exciting role play for the novice or connoisseur
All dysfunctions, premature reactions
Finely forgiven in luxurious surroundings
Gentle confidential effective unforgettable
Airconditioned
Privacy assured

Hear the voice behind this Ad
Telephone Free
You know the number

Richard Rosen

Friend and Colleague

When I first met Allan in 1994, in the process of planning a segment on the Apology Line for "Eye to Eye With Connie Chung," it was over lunch at a downtown restaurant. As a journalist and television producer, I'm accustomed to a slight but unbridgeable barrier when talking to sources for, or subjects of, a piece; between me and them there is a kind of no-man's-land full of wariness and detachment, even suspicion. That is to say, having lunch with someone whose life or work you wish to record and then manipulate in accordance with the prevailing notion of what makes a television segment is not the same as having lunch with a friend or even a stranger on whom you have no such designs.

However, I felt no barrier with Allan. Instead I felt an intelligent warmth that dissolved the journalistic distance. For Allan was a journalist too; he recorded, in all its dark grandeur, the world of guilt, shame, and the forbidden. He reminded me in so many ways of myself and many good friends of mine, all of us nurtured and deformed by virtue of being children of the '50s and sons of the '60s. He was a social and cultural critic by nature, a preternatural voyeur, a cataloguer of the abnormal, a flirter with extremes, a skeptical consumer of the experience of being an American.

The difference with Allan was that he never sold out. Where so many of us repackage our best talents for the marketplace of mass media, Allan hung tight, the imperatives of his mission always winning out over the need for recognition.

I had hoped to award him and his work a drop of recognition with a segment on "Eye to Eye," whose narcotized viewership would almost certainly have trouble understanding what he was all about. But when the program went off the air before I could get my odd little segment on, it seemed perversely just in a way; Allan and his work had been spared the dishonor of association with the cheap voyeurism of the television magazine genre.

Typically, when I told Allan over the phone in July that the segment was not going to make the show (it was now almost a year since we had first met at lunch), Allan was philosophical about it. He had refused to capitalize on the Apology Line for fifteen years, and so this was no great setback for him.

For me, it was not a great setback, either. The real value of my single year of knowing Allan was that I got to know Allan. In a world (and especially a city) of jerry-built friendships and coldly calculated social life, Allan, it seemed to me, had never lost the difficult art of being himself. When you spent time with him, it taught you more about being yourself. I felt that so many of the beautiful spontaneous tributes to him at his waterside funeral service proved this over and over.

I'm not trying to idealize him. One doesn't spent fifteen years on the Apology Line without it being some kind of effort to neutralize the demons within. And in modesty there's often a touch of megalomania. When I interviewed him on camera, I asked him whether he ever felt, as lord of the Apology Line, that he was putting himself in a God-like position.

"I don't think it's God-like," he replied. "I just operate the system."

Well, Allan didn't operate the system that decides who lives and who dies. Whoever operates that system needs to apologize for taking him away so soon. •

Dear Ms. Apology

Abdullah Muhammad
Apology Line Caller

I usually called the "Church of the Apologetic Predator." I am really grieved over the loss of Mr. Apology. I feel for you and his family. I have concealed $10 because that is all that I can afford to give. I have been hearing some of the other callers and their messages concerning what happened. One caller in particular made an impression on me. He stated something to the effect that as long as the Apology Line continues, Mr. Apology is really still with us in essence. I would like to thank you for your decision to keep the Apology Line going. You, like Mr. Apology, are contributing something very beneficial and very useful. •

Letter to Allan's Parents

Judex Lafcadio Tonra, Ph.D.
Apology Line Caller

It is with a profound sense of loss and emptiness that I write this letter. I respectfully offer my deepest and most heartfelt condolences and sympathies at the death of your son, a man who through his work and dedication brought so many people together and helped others to see inside themselves and learn to relate to others.

I have had the pleasure of listening to the Apology Line for almost all of its fifteen years of existence and, though I never had the honor of meeting your son personally, I had always considered his personality and demeanor to be forthright, honest and upstanding. Though the only contact I have had with Allan was within the environs of the Apology Line, I do feel that I am not overstating myself in describing my attitude toward him. His death has left me with a pronounced emptiness in my life. So ends another chapter.

I am sure that you do not need me, a stranger, to tell you what a special and important individual Allan was. In eighteen years of teaching I cannot remember when I've come across a more keen and able mind; capable of fiery debate, razor-sharp wit, and unlimited compassion, sometimes all at once. Like many Apology Line listeners, I respected Allan greatly. And I, also a parent, feel that he was also an object of great pride and honor to his family.

I close this letter by saying that your son was revered, venerated, and yes, even loved by many and will be truly missed by all. Like the Buddha of Boundless Light, he elevated the perspective and the hearts of all he came in contact with. •

Andrew Moore

Friend and Colleague

I'll always remember the first time I saw the Apology command center: there was this electronic den filled with computers, oscilloscopes, database manuals, a crowded shelf with books on criminology and surveillance, maybe Nietzsche, and there, at the heart of it all, like a seasoned deejay, was Allan...you might have expected the great Oz perhaps, but there was Allan, laid back, honest, humorful, above all compassionate. So Allan gave me a tape, an anthology of early calls, and there's the famous Bernie phone call, the one that gives you chills of listening to a true sociopath, and after the man confesses to various murders, he promises to find Allan and kill him. It's truly one of spookiest recordings I've ever heard...and there's Allan, watching a new call log on, blithely discussing the art scene, the dogs, carpentry jobs that might never get done...and always it was the Line, Apology, that consumed him, it was the people who were calling, the ones with problems they couldn't face, dilemmas they had run away from, a fathomless morass of boasting, bathos, beatings. Every day Allan attended to his Line like the most devoted gardener, pruning, trimming, nurturing, grafting new categories to hard realities. His real concerns were to listen, to find a way to respond, to be transparent yet omnipresent, (I'm sure Flaubert would have loved the project). I feel he acted bravely because he cared so deeply about these electronic whispers. He liked the danger of it, like his sculptural piece that trapped your hand in its maw, like the depths he so loved. I'll miss him in many ways: his humor, his strength, his caring, his lack of superficial concerns. I liked sitting in the kitchen with a coffee talking about future Apology projects. I'll miss the man the way some may miss the reassuring voice. I'll miss the man for whom art was lived, for the community he created, for all the voices he set free, and for his lovely wife, Marissa. •

Helena G.

Friend and *Apology Magazine* Staff

I met and grew to know Allan Bridge during a particularly dismal period of my life. It was almost two years that I worked with him on Apology Magazine, and, although I had my ups and down, during most of that time I was a wretch. I never talked to Allan much about my problems for a variety of reason, but I think he somehow knew how pathetic I had become. Then again, maybe he was just that consistently supportive and encouraging to all of his friends.

One of the things I learned about being a wretch is that the precipitating circumstances often do not warrant the resultant, continuing and self-perpetuating state of misery. The injuries one inflicts upon one's self, and others if it comes to that, can be worse than the original victimization. The hurt and shame of an abusive childhood, poverty, illness, or even something as innocuous as a failed romance or a lost job, can snowball into a juggernaut of negativity propelled by guilt, self-defeating doubt and helplessness, festering envy of those happy, successful people, and the humiliation of real or imagined slights from friends and enemies. The truth in my own case is that I had few legitimate complaints.

But the question of whether one is entitled to one's anguish isn't important. Wretchedness cannot be ignored, in yourself or others, or you may one day find yourself a lonely, forgotten person, or a person with a bullet in his head put there by some angry stranger. Allan, I believe, knew this intuitively, and meeting the juggernaut head on was at least a part of what the Apology Line was all about.

To say Allan was a Christ-like figure is a ridiculous overstatement—he was an artist and, yes, a voyeur—but he was like Christ in that he was a friend to the wretched. I remain amazed by how much he genuinely cared about his "whiny rejects," as I flippantly referred to Apology Line callers. If Sartre was right and "hell is other people," then Allan had been to hell and back quite a few times in the last fifteen years. And for that I hope you will join me in thanking him. •

Message

"Gaston"
Apology Line Caller

This is Gaston from Ottawa, Canada. I am very sorry to hear about Mr. Apology. It's two months today. He phoned me on March 15th and I was so glad to hear from him. I know I'm going to miss him very much. Thank you. •

ALLAN

KMB, Friend Since 1952

Falls Church, VA. FA 4166
5th Grade — Mrs. Parrot model boats
model planes homemade rockets cherry bombs
M-80's molten lead from civil war bullets bow &
arrow tree forts camping trips stolen trips to Coney
Island parachute rides stolen slingshots and fishing
weights the first oil painting the second and the
third the sculptured marble rabbit chicago steel mills
university of DuPont circle abstract lsd yellow
submarine hugs
...so long as we live, they too shall live, for they are
now a part of us, as we remember them.

...so long.

Carrie Welch

Friend

I met Allan in early 1980. I was immediately drawn to him—he had an inexplicable quality which made you want to know him and moreover, one which made you want him to know you.

In the fifteen years that I had the privilege and the joy to know Allan, it was impossible not to love him and to cherish his very special friendship, not least because of the wonderful complexities of his nature and the diversity of his character. He was at once a mentor, a teacher (he knew so much, and such a variety of things), a "colleague" (we could talk for hours about his projects and mine, having a deep curiosity in each other's obsessions) and at the same time, Allan was also one of the best friends—that rare type of friend who you know is made for life. He was caring and loving and soft. And he could often be girlish, or childish or silly.

Mostly, Allan was generous—with his interests, his knowledge, his time, his possessions, but even more with his support and his love. He shared openly and expected you to do the same. It was hard not to. He'd be hurt if Marissa and I, as girlfriends, excluded him from dates or phone calls, and especially when we shared trivial girlish secrets or private confessions. Perhaps this aspect of his nature reflects his involvement in and obsession with the Apology Project—and obsessed he was, from when I first knew him in Apology's infancy.

Allan was one of the most humorous, loyal, dependable and trustworthy friends I've ever had. His support was unconditional: he always wanted to know and then to reassure. As a result, I always wanted to please him, to make worthy his generosity. He was the kind of man that could keep you from ever feeling afraid because he seemed so utterly fearless himself.

A day does not pass when I don't think of him. I couldn't miss a person more. •

...in loving memory

Dick Feldman, Friend

We were first introduced to Allan and Marissa by our daughter, Carrie Welch.

We had heard about them in advance of the meeting, so much so, that we already thought that we knew them well.

But meeting them was even more special. And in time, we developed a friendship we could truly call our own, independent of Carrie.

Allan and I even shared a working relationship for a short period of time. I was captivated by his "Mr. Apology"project and together we tried hard to make it into a television series. Perhaps, at that date, it was ahead of its time.

Allan recently told me that finally he was close to a possible TV deal.

He had just reached his 50th birthday and all the work that Allan patiently exerted in the name of "Mr. Apology," and his "against all odds" belief in it was on the verge of exploding and becoming the dream he had when he began.

We have all lost.

Allan was first and foremost a very real human being, in the best sense, a friend to so many—loving and caring—and a major contributor to a better way of life for us all.

Fredda and I will always cherish knowing Allan—and shall not forget him. RIP. •

Allan at fourteen.

Douglas Welch

Friend

I have a vivid memory of a small dinner party at the loft in the mid-'80s: halfway through dinner a call came through on the Apology Line. Allan glanced around at his guests with an expression that invited us to listen if we wanted. We did. I will never forget the effect on the table as this "presence" entered the room. It was a voice of pure twisted evil, a guilt-ridden sickness that you could pity if only it weren't so menacing. It had come into our midst and we all pulled closer with a collective shiver. Someone commented that it felt like the galvanizing effect a wolf's howl in the night can have on campers and their sense of safety around a feeble campfire. I remember feeling how complacent and naive we all were, thinking that just because we don't see it, it isn't there. That we walk among this invisible sickness every day. The Apology Line was like a pair of night goggles, illuminating the activity in a very sick jungle. If Art holds a mirror up to society you couldn't get a more naked look.

Allan's fascination with the underside of human nature brings to mind a lighter memory of Allan at a fashionable beach during that summer when the only book on the beach was *Bonfire of the Vanities*. It was so amusing to watch the distressed doubletakes of beach strollers at the sight of Allan, deep into his huge textbook, *Understanding the Psychopath*, disturbing the sunny conformity of a mile-long row of Rolex-wearing bestseller readers.

Given his need to know what was under the surface, Allan's love of SCUBA diving is not surprising. But Allan was no mere voyeur. His commitment to long Apology dialogues over the years was proof enough that he took seriously the power of what he had set in motion. Maybe being raised Catholic made the idea of a secular confessional have a special resonance with me, but I know that Allan did help a lot of people. Of all the sacraments Confession alone has a real practical function in the here and now, a therapeutic benefit, a chance for cleansing renewal. How suited Allan was to the role of Confessor, with his thoughtful and non-judgmental nature. Who couldn't trust that voice?

The ultimate irony is that there is one special call the Apology Line needs to be kept open for: the one that apologizes not just to Allan, but to Marissa, and to all of us who have loved him and lost him. •

Cair Crawford

Friend

When I was researching material on violence for a video project, I met Allan. We spent hours discussing the tapes and analyzing the content of the calls. It was thrilling, as if we were listening in on a dialogue with the Self shifting from intimacy to objectivity. One couldn't be sure whether the stories were true, but whether fantasy or reality the images conveyed dreams more vivid than waking life. It was an experience both touching and frightening. Allan enjoyed the dichotomy and seemed acutely aware of the fine line between seer and voyeur, father-confessor and co-conspirator—the thin membrane connecting us to the underworld.

Allan seemed to have died the way he lived, doing something he loved deep beneath the surface, purposefully exploring, looking for secrets. The irony of his killer being unaccountable does not go unnoticed.

Allan is missed and we mourn our loss but he is not gone. He knew better than most what it means to be a voice in the dark, to have an ear for the truth. His work and his memory will not die. •

Allan with friends in his "hippy" days.

Letter

Dan Kelly, 'Zine Publisher

Dear Mrs. Apology: I hope that doesn't sound too stupid, but since I don't know you or Mr. Apology's real names, it will have to do.

I'm writing because I wanted to express my condolences in whatever small way I can. I publish a few 'zines, but the one with which I'm most often connected was called *Evil* ®. It was through *Evil* ® that I made Mr. Apology's brief acquaintance. I plugged Apology, then I wrote to him to tell him how much I enjoyed your magazine. He reciprocated with a few free issues of Apology, and a very nice letter. Well, even though I only "knew" him briefly through our 'zines and the US Post Office, I consider myself lucky to have known him in any sense. Mr. A was a true gentleman in every sense of the word, and I assure you, he will be very much missed.

I hope you're doing well, and if there's anything I can do, please contact me. Thank you, and take care. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

I'm incredibly shocked. I've been a regular caller for over seven years now. I've always called several times a week and I don't know what to say really.

This line has been invaluable to me over many periods in my life, rough periods, the Magazine as well. Although I never met Mr. Apology, I've had conversations with him over the Line for several years and the Line has meant such a great deal to me. Although most of us have never met him in person, conversing with him over the years, he was truly like a friend and someone that I cherished. To his family my heart goes out to you, and my thoughts and my prayers. He did such an incredible service for a lot of people and he'll be terribly missed. •

Mr. Apology's In-Law Tidbits

Peter and Dolores Waichunas
Marissa's Parents

We are deeply saddened by Allan's passing and indeed he will be missed, but surely he left his mark on this world. Allan was a many-faceted, intellectual individual. First and foremost a husband, fine artist, SCUBA diver, fine cabinet maker, etc. He had a genuine interest in helping people as Mr. Apology.

Since Allan was an avid diver, in fact diving was one of his main passions, Marissa became a diver and got to see the beauty of the underwater world. It was due to Allan's inspiration that Marissa's art flourished. He called Marissa's art "Underseascapes," and that became the title of her first one-person exhibition.

Marissa and Allan were married on June 10th, 1984. Of course, being waterbugs, they were married on a boat. We recall passing the Statue of Liberty, encased in scaffolding for its renovation, and Ellis Island, while cruising the Hudson and East Rivers. What beautiful memories.

On one of our visits to Manhattan, Pete and Allan entered a potato pancake-eating contest. Very interesting results were experienced by Allan from this contest. Needless to say, Pete won.

With heavy hearts we say "adieu" to dear Mr. Apology.

Su dieve ir su miele. •

The Virgin and the Dynamo and/ *Tetsuo* at the Palladium

for A., in mem.
by Samuel Truitt

Who will reinforce my voice? what force
will draw me to shoot into the sky this moment on the armatures of my syntax?
The walls of the gray compartment above the subway floor padded with garbage,
what's fallen through in a checker-board pattern.
I use the analogy of a sunset. For when a person opens up their whole psyche,
when what they have kept hidden and shut up is suddenly exposed,
who could resist or tire of that? And every line then is a trench,
a rifle-butt braced at its edge. Beyond the barrel protrudes an object of yearning and, like a fetus, in essence maniacal
flowing over the digital walls, the volcanoes of distance.

Hello. My name is real. If only you could see me now

Yet will we recognize each other then or will it be like here razor-sharp but cut off. Like the beams of searchlights
apogee, apogee and then poof!

Soon even your brains will turn to hot metal

This poem set out to be a description of a beautiful woman

If you put an 'e-r' over any of these words they mean "to shoot death"

Message

Sean from Brooklyn
Apology Line Caller

I just heard that Mr. Apology died. Although I don't think anybody would joke about that, it sounds unreal. I kept thinking I would hear something like, "Well, Mr. Apology wanted to retire and so this is a hoax." Or, "This was the only way he could give up the magazine, to fake his death." But it sounded too real. I don't know why but it's really shaking me up.

After calling the Line for over a year, I feel like I know this person. I put him on my mailing list for my band. I would talk back and forth with him on the Line. He even printed one of my calls in the latest issue of Apology Magazine.

Apology Magazine and the Apology Line and Mr. Apology are all one of a kind. This is somebody who will never be duplicated. This is the end of a movement, of an era really. To this day, I can't even figure out if this was performance art or if it was... I guess it doesn't matter what it was. It became the outlet for so many people, the pain, the secrets, and, whatever else, the humor. A chance to debate, a chance to meet people. I would like there to be a way for the Apology Line to continue.

I feel like I lost a friend. And I will miss you, Mr. Apology. I hope wherever you are you'll call the Line once in a while and hear how much people miss you.

Good-bye. •

"Natasha"/Tracy

Friend and Apology Line Caller

These days are strange. Allan, Mr. Apology, has been dead for two months. I write this condolence as much for myself as for Marissa and those others, beloved, whom he left behind. To make sense of this, to make order from the chaos of death, defeats me utterly. I knew so little of Allan Bridge, so much of Mr. Apology. The former is forever gone, the latter will be with me always.

I discovered the Apology Line shortly after moving to New York. Eight hours on the phone, and I was hooked. For the first time in my adult life, I allowed myself regret. Spurred on by the confessions of others, precious memories tumbled forth interminably, like circus clowns from a car. What I learned of myself in those first few weeks of life with Apology will endure. Allan's gift to me by way of his art was the ability to make peace with my past. Sleepless at dawn, I still reach for Apology, the only thing in New York that forgives.

The freedom with which people spoke of their lives on the Line was, and is, a tribute to the quality of Allan's compassion, the goodness of his heart. He was respected and loved, I was one of those who loved him.

Sitting at a computer in Allan's apartment, Marissa in the kitchen, people scurrying about trying to finish the memorial issue of the Magazine, I am struck by how odd this business of life is. I don't know how to tell Marissa that I share her grief though not her grace, that I don't have the words for the way that I loved him. So, we eat dandelion greens and talk deep ecology. Someone next door is screaming bloody murder. Allan's dog waits by the door for her master to come home. •

Letter

"Annette"
Apology Line Caller

An open letter to all Apologists (especially Ms. A, all the people who showed up at Strawberry Fields [a memorial service for Apology Line caller in Central Park] and, of course, Mr. Apology):

This is Annette (Bam-Bam) from Brooklyn:

I really live in Queens, but I grew up in Brooklyn, so...

Apology—what is it? It's a great way to be a voyeur, an exhibitionist, an artist, a real person. Fakes and phonies are so apparent, so you don't have to worry about them. They have to live with themselves.

Mr. Apology was a great person. He was an innovator. I feel that the Apology Line is going to be very infamous.

Mr. Apology gave people a place to hide, to seek, to play, to hate, to love, to laugh, to live. I love him and all the people who participate, even those who remain anonymous. We know you're out there, we don't know who you are or what you look like, but we feel your presence. We love you too.

Long live Apology! •

Joel Leonard Katz

Friend

Allan Bridge, you are no ordinary person.
You never were.
And your accomplishments, your "art" as it were,
are as immortal as the pleasant memory of your laugh.

The last words you wrote to me
only two weeks before your unforeseen departure
I would like to share with other who knew you:
"Hi. I hope your life continues
to be an adventure for you."

Anonymous

Apology Line Caller

What I've written, in my first ever submission to Mr. Apology's 'zine, is a farewell to the man.

I'll be honest, there were moments when he and I butted heads. I feel that over the last two years or so, he was letting things get to him more than I had ever seen to be the case before. (In fact, he became uncomfortably reminiscent of myself in that respect!) Even in spite of any such displays, we can't forget that he was, first, last and foremost, well-intentioned.

I mean that in two ways, too: I mean that we mustn't forget it, because to not give him that much credit is to do him a terrible injustice at a time when, he is, obviously, unable to defend himself. He deserves credit for all the comfort the Line brought to lonely people, confused people, suicidal people, and generally anyone needing human contact. TG, of course, is the best example, but she's only one of many.

But I also mean that we literally can't forget it. Anyone who was touched by Mr. Apology and the Apology Line can't not know that. All of our lives were greatly enriched by our contact with this man and his creative vision, and none of us will likely ever forget it.

This project went far beyond what he originally envisioned, and the vision in the first place was grand. It brought together people from every social strata, every racial, ethnic, religious, national and economic division. It made us talk to, and more importantly, listen to people we would never have been in contact with. The insights and sense of community we've gained as a result will be with us for a long, long time, and they are his enduring legacy.

So, as I look back on my association with him, I ask myself, what would I like most to say to him now, if I could? The answer it this: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. A, for being there when I needed to rant, to blow off steam, to find any human contact I could. For helping me to explore the dark side of human nature. (I can't deny a fascination with it myself.) For involving me in so many stimulating exchanges. For bringing me into contact with people I value, and never would have encountered otherwise. Your enduring legacy will long be with me. Thank you and good-bye. •

One of the original posters Allan placed around Manhattan.

Mark K. Thomas

Friend and Colleague

Anyone who called the Line from mid 1991 through early 1993 may have known me as someone else. I went by the handle of "The Paste-Up Man." And for several months in 1992 I also was known as "Mr. Apostle." It's considerably less likely that very many of you remember a "Mr. Apostle," so by way of brief introduction, I will simply say that it was I who collaborated with Allan over the course of several months to create Apology Magazine.

During 1992, when Allan (or Mr. Apology as I then knew him) spoke at great length on the Line about the very imminent closure of the Apology Project, it was I who wrote a letter to Apology offering my help in doing something to help bring the Project to a bigger audience, to a new audience, and to help establish Apology as something more than just a phone call.

When I wrote that letter and introduced myself, I had no idea that he would even answer me, much less that I would meet this mysterious person and that we would produce a magazine. I only knew when I wrote to him that both of us were ambitious, quite hopeful, and that we both believed in the integrity of the Project.

Allan and I became friends, and I have always held it as one of the true honors of my life that I was the first caller to the Apology Line that Allan chose to meet in person. It was both bizarre and thrilling to see the man behind that marvelous voice; facing Mr. Apology himself was a lot like facing all the dark experiences and emotions which so many thousands of people had chosen to reveal to the Apology tapes. In short, I was petrified when I met Allan, but over time I felt the same as I felt about the Line itself: its mere presence became comforting.

During the time in which I was an active caller and participant to the Apology Line, I would never have thought it possible that anyone from the Line would willingly identify themselves or that there would ever be opportunity to put faces or personalities to the voices. I was never totally at ease with the concept of obtaining atonement or serenity by expressing yourself to an anonymous community. But the content of the calls was often so riveting that it almost seemed like the barriers of anonymity could somehow be made irrelevant, and all of us could be together both in our minds and in the heart of the Apology Project.

I, for one, have chosen to identify myself because I just don't think it matters if people know my dark side. Moreover, I personally have chosen to tell many, many people the things I so fearfully confessed to Apology's answering machines two and three years ago, and I can truthfully say that it is a far more gratifying experience to have exposed myself in that way than into the philosophical and exculpatory purgatory of Apology.

It is impossible to imagine that the Apology Project could ever continue in anyone else's hands. Allan was the embodiment of the Apology Project. It was, above everything, the definition of Allan Bridge, and no one else could ever maintain the Project with the unique blend of compassion, dignity, and care that Allan Bridge so lovingly expended on the Project. When you called Apology, you were calling Allan Bridge. When you called Apology and left a statement, you were entering his life, he was entering your life, and you became a part of an esoteric community which he created, and whose character and profile he alone maintained.

Apology is among the most strikingly personal artistic creations of our time, and in its most compelling hours it captured the strength, the essence, and the meaning of an extremely vital strain of American life, and of the American experience in two decades of the 20th century. Apology captured the power of paranoia, the painfulness of fear, and the unique sounds of obsession, panic, remorse and sadness—and always, always compassion and care. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

This is a condolence to this man who I didn't know and knew little of, although I know V who felt so warmly for him, and she conveyed to me something of his dimension. So I sense something of his spirit and something of his adventurous kick and I am sorry for him if he's sorry and I'm happy for him if he's happy. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

I've listened to the Line for ten years or so, and I've never said a word until now. I take that back, a couple of words, that's it. I'm just in shock, and I realize—I think I realized it before, but I really realize it now—how much I depended on him, and it's kind of weird.

I regret now having not spoken or said anything, basically for no other reason than I'm just a very poor speaker. I stumble on my words and make bad arguments. •

Letter

Ricky from Bay Ridge
Apology Line Caller

What can I say about Allan Bridge, AKA Mr. Apology? When I found out I was shocked for a lack of better words. I received a phone call from Tracy G. in Virginia. Needless to say, Tracy was crying really bad and had a very difficult time telling me. For days after I was depressed. I only spoke live on the phone to Mr. A once. It's a conversation I'll never forget. It was like we talked a million times before. Allan Bridge served so many people with the Apology Line. Many times when I thought I just could not handle my problems any more I would call the Line and express my feelings in a way I could never do before. Totally honest! I feel that Mr. A got a great pleasure out of helping people. I'm just so damn sorry that I will never get to meet Allan Bridge. To shake his hand and to tell him, "Thank you"! Thank you for being my shrink, my friend, and opening up in a way I never thought I could.

When I found out how he died, I said a quick prayer that he went (died) quick and easy. Not even knowing what hit him. When I met Mr. A's charming wife she said he did pass away quick which I was glad to hear. He didn't deserve to end his life like this. I hope from my heart his wife and family will be able to get through this without a lot of pain. I hope wherever Mr. A is now, he is happy and content—Heaven or some other nice place. •

Alec Wilkinson

Journalist and Friend

I wrote a short magazine story about Allan during the summer of 1993. The story was a little sleepy and didn't really work out and the magazine decided not to run it. I called Allan to thank him for his time and give him the bad news. Before I had a chance to, I asked if anything interesting had taken place on the Apology Line since I had last talked to him, and he said that he had received a call from a young man who said that he had murdered his mother, and Allan wasn't sure if the call was genuine, but there was an element of anxiety to the caller's voice that made Allan feel that the young man might be telling the truth, or anyway some version of it. Over the next few days, Allan had a series of calls with the young man, and it eventually came out that although there were elements of emotional truth to his story, the story itself was an invention, and I ended up writing a piece called "The Confession," which appeared in *The New Yorker* a few weeks later.

Allan was a wonderful person to work with. He was as candid and attentive and intelligent and painstaking in dealing with me as I knew him to be with the workings of the Apology Line and its callers. He invented a world, or at least brought one into being, the way a novelist or an artist invents one. An enormous and secret body of experience has been collected and identified because Allan imagined that it could be. I loved it that he had originally meant to give up the Apology project once he felt that it had accomplished its purposes but found that he had become too absorbed by the endeavor to let it go. Years from now people will read and hear the intimate voices that Allan recorded and encouraged, and they will fell as if the past is whispering to them across the years. That, I think, is a distinguished legacy. •

Carole Cleaver, Rory Callahan and Meagan Callahan

Friends

We met Allan through his wife, Marissa, about five years ago. My husband and I were starting a small art gallery on a shoestring, so to speak, and Marissa was the first artist that we showed in the gallery. We had a lot of work to do in preparing for the show, and of course we were way behind schedule. I think Allan was initially very skeptical of what we were up to—it was so obvious to everybody that we had absolutely no experience. Allan had a lot of prior experience with galleries and museums with his own shows of his paintings and conceptual art projects. I was always worried about proving to him that the gallery would work out and that we would be helpful to Marissa.

Allan was incredibly supportive of Marissa and of us, nevertheless. He made all the frames for Marissa's paintings by hand, with great care and love. They were works of art in themselves. He also helped us a great deal with the preparation of the gallery. On the very afternoon of the opening of Marissa's show, Allan combed the neighborhood for electrical supplies and other materials needed to improve the lighting and the look of the gallery and show. In the midst of our chaos and anxiety, Allan remained a calm, intelligent and amused presence. He was such a generous, wise character that we all loved him and enjoyed his company.

Two months before Marissa's show at the gallery, our daughter Meagan was born, and she grew up adoring both Allan and Marissa. When they would come over for dinner, Allan would make little art projects with Meagan. She called him the "napkin artist" because he could make such gorgeous cut-out designs and pictures from a simple paper napkin. We would save them, tacking them up in the living room where they would hang for months, or until the next batch of Allan and Meagan pictures would be created. He was so patient, kind, and sweet with Meagan, not patronizing like so many adults are with children. I think his gentle, kind manner with little children is an aspect of Allan Bridge that many people might not know about. Allan was truly a special, unique person. We miss him very much. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

It was immediately obvious that Mr. Apology touched a lot of people. As someone who knows what it is like to lose a lot of friends, unexpectedly and tragically, I'd like to give my condolences to the family and friends. I'd like to also send my condolences to the people that were touched by Mr. A in so many different ways, 'cause I'm sure it's a tragic lost to them as well, as it is to me. Mr. Apology, rest in peace. We love you. •

to allan

rachel rogers, friend

there are these many days that i spend with your wife - the one who misses you most. i came to know you first through her—so many stories through so many days of painting painting painting.

this is one of those days and we've finished a job, all the supplies are put away and it still feels like you are here, somewhere around. i find i can't believe it, so often. but i see her carry on with phenomenal strength and grace, carry on with tying things up, so much left to do, and i know it's all true. often my frustration with your departure is selfish. what about your promise to teach color theory to me? i know you're the best... what about apology software? we were supposed to discuss that... what about all that stuff you know?

you've been gone now for almost as long as i actually knew you. suddenly you were my new friend, and like so many others, i felt a trust and comfort with you so quickly. someday, when the painting jobs were done, when the next magazine was mailed away, we would have time.

i was sitting in your chair in your room, asking you, out loud, "where did you go?". looking around at all your important stuff, wondering what could be more important, that you got called away so quickly? it must have been a very urgent and important task, because you were already very busy right here.

thank you. i just miss you. •

Steven Svymbersky

Owner, Qvimby's Qveer Store; Chicago

I only got to meet Mr. Apology once, when he came to the store for a 'zine signing in 1994. I was a little worried that meeting him would ruin the mystery he had created by never revealing too much about himself in his magazine. It was important, I think, for him to remain somewhat anonymous, like the priest in the Catholic Confessional. Getting to hang out with he and his wife for an afternoon didn't diminish my respect for him at all. In fact, I thought that he was the kind of guy I would share my secrets with as a friend.

It's rare to find a 'zine as original and enlightening as Apology. Each issue revealed more about human psychology and sociology than any college text ever could. The Apology Line provided a much needed outlet for people with heavy clouds hanging over them, and the 'zine that documented the Line's more interesting calls proved to be one of the most mind-bending publications the underground has ever produced. Mr. Apology's talent and insight will be sorely missed by everyone who has benefited from his work.

Regardless of how fictional most of my interactions with the Apology Line were— A lot of times people, they put on a persona, they put on a mask, they sort of cover up what it is they want to get off their chest; I can say that's pretty much what I did. I have nothing but gratitude to Mr. Apology. I'm sorry that I won't be able to interact with him. He became an important part of my life, even in the short time that I've been calling. •

Message

"Panama"

Apology Line Caller

I experienced a lot of death in my life, loved ones, friends, you know, my mother, now my grandfather. And, strange as it might sound to anybody, Mr. Apology's death saddens me and upsets me. I almost feel like I'm losing a friend, even though I've never met him. And, it's just a tragedy, I think, for everybody. This Line has been a great public service that I wish was acknowledged more.

I think that nobody really calls the Apology Line more than once unless they have something that they want to say that is louder than truth, something that's bothering them, or just even for companionship. Mr. Apology provided a great, great service for people who are lonely, people who are desperate, people who had real problems.

I came to a revelation I may not have come to if it weren't for the Apology Line, and I wish I could thank Mr. Apology for that.

I just want to say to Mrs. Apology and to any one else who's close to and loved Mr. A, I feel your loss. I know what it feels like. I've been through it. I'm going through it now. •

Allan in his "beatnik" phase.

Jeff Myers

Friend

I first met Allan Bridge back in 1986. My wife, Vicky, worked with Allan's wife Marissa and they had become good friends. Gradually, we all became good friends and over the years we shared many memorable moments together including picnics and dinners for Thanksgiving and Christmas. We would talk about any and everything and I don't think there was a subject that Allan was not interested in talking about. He loved to talk about music and at some point I discovered that he loved country music. I confess that I was a little surprised by this. Country music is so simple and Allan seemed to me anything but simple. Allan seemed to be able to embrace both simple and complex ideas and emotions with equal interest. He had a very smooth style and intelligence that seemed to burn as bright as a thousand suns, but he was never smug or condescending and he was an excellent listener.

Anyway, he made a country tape for me, which was a compilation of his favorite George Jones songs and this became my favorite tape and still is to this day. I actually learned every song on that tape and it has continued to inspire me. Thank you, Allan!

Once we were all together for Thanksgiving and I was telling Allan my unfortunate experience of being mugged by four guys on my way home from the store. Allan listened intently as I spouted on about how the police couldn't do anything even though I told them that these guys were still on the corner as they were taking my report. I pointed them out, but the cops said that I would have to come down and try to identify these guys from mug shots. I was angry and didn't want to waste my time with "red tape," although inside I fantasized about the day I would become a vigilante and the wrath of my revenge would fall swiftly on my assailants.

For Christmas, Allan gave me a little book entitled Techniques of Revenge by Victor Santoro. Inside he wrote, "Merry Christmas??? Jeff, this is only for professionals. Do not try this at home. Allan." This was the perfect remedy for my frustration, a humorous handbook for do-it-yourself justice. I was able to let go of my anger and laugh.

To me, Allan was like my big brother in New York. I respected him and admired his keen mind and gentle nature. I feel honored to have known Allan Bridge and after meeting his family and friends, I feel that I have an even more complete picture of this great man. I have since told many people about my friend Allan Bridge. On a flight back from LA, I was telling this woman sitting next to me about Allan and his work. This total stranger remembered hearing about Allan on the news, and somehow I felt comfort in knowing that he was remembered. I will never forget him!

Someone said that Allan never made enemies, he only made friends. I consider myself fortunate to be included on this list and I will miss Allan very much! •

The Artist in the mid '70s, justing standing around.

Quickness

George K. Singley
Friend

I'm grateful to Allan for many things, but especially for teaching me to drive a car in NYC. His driving style was long on improvisation and short on obeying traffic laws. Of course his style emphasized speed or "quickness" as he called it, but his real specialty was driving in reverse whenever possible, especially when he wanted to back-track on one-way streets.

I recall these lessons whenever I rent a car and bring it into Manhattan. When I commit a moving violation or make an abrupt U-turn on a two-way street I think of Allan and shout "I'm from out of town!" I'll always have fond memories of Allan in his 1975 blue Datsun with the 200 hail-stone dents in the roof...

Ken Laser

Friend

Sometimes Allan amazed me. He appeared to give everyone respect. He would intently and carefully take in what other people said, seriously considering the value of their ideas and words. He was never cynical; but would seem to innocently listen and ask questions that helped the other person evaluate their own words. He was brilliant and knowledgeable, always a student. The fact that he so unaffectedly was open to the words of those with lesser gifts humbles me. I believe that this, most of all, is why he was loved. It is why I loved him.

The ability to approach every new situation as a "newborn child" is of course what makes someone an artist. That is what Allan was, an artist. •

Sidney A. Fine

Friend

I am the father of Mark Fine who was a close friend of Allan during their teens. Mark cannot be reached at this time to write himself, although in his last letter to me he expressed great sadness at the news of Allan's death. I cannot speak for Mark, but I can for myself.

I was always attracted to Allan. He never said very much, either as a youngster or later on when I knew him as a young man, and an aspiring graphic artist. I could tell, nevertheless, that he was always turning things over in his mind. He was reflective. I wondered what he was thinking but never asked and he didn't say.

I was one of the early purchasers of his art and have two of his early paintings which I cherish. They are organized and structured like a blueprint but are also abstract and portentous giving me the feeling that he is reaching for a truth that lies hidden at great depth as at the bottom of a very deep well. I have lived with these paintings for 25 years and their mystery fascinates me still.

About two years ago, I learned about Allan being Mr. Apology from his parents who are my friends. At that time I read a few of the newsletters and also the article in *The New Yorker*. Although some of the material was far out and upsetting in the sense that I would not want to deal with the situations portrayed, somehow I could see this as something Allan would explore. As in his art, he tended to create his own parameters and then let them take him where they would in his search for truth. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

I can't believe it. When I first heard it, I thought it was a joke. I feel really bad about it. He's been around since I can remember. He's helped so many people with their problems. It's weird to see him go like that. I'm still torn up about it.

He's like an icon. I never would have thought something like this would happen to a great man like that. It's like I depended on him. I don't want him to be forgotten. •

Poem by "Sam"

Apology Line Caller

While here on this Earth, you gave of yourself to many a lonely soul.
I strongly believe that this was your most important goal.

Learning about others was your intention
When you created this unique invention.

To most you were, but a voice across the Line
Who gave of yourself, and of your time.

To me you were a friend, a Guardian Angel of sorts;
Like shelter from the storm you were my port.

Sometimes, sadly, life has no rhyme or reason.
It passes by, just like each season.

The sun continues to shine and the waves of the ocean roll on.
Your memory still lives, even though you are gone.

What we cannot see, we cannot understand.
We're only human, while we walk this land.

Words can console us, for a while.
We can think of your voice or your smile.

We can imagine you're in a better place
A world of beauty, no age or race.

But the unknown brings fear to us all
And our tears of sadness will continue to fall.

A friend to so many, a man so very wise
Your spirit is among us, it will always survive.

I know that you lived your life to the fullest and you would look back without regret
For you were a man of greatness, a man I shall never forget.

Stephanie Urdang

Friend

Compared to the grace of Allan Bridge, anything I attempt to write for the memorial issue of Apology falls flat and feeble. Two years ago when I first met Allan, he suggested that I might contribute something to Apology. It was my intention to do so, but it never happened. Allan didn't seem to mind though. I was always the one who brought it up,not he. And he'd stand there smiling down from his great height and I'd stare into his face of forgiveness. •

Christy Rupp and Mark Bunnell

Friends

Allan's work possessed that very unique combination of elements which is successful because it proves that the political is personal. To be public and yet resonate on an intimate scale is something many artists try to do, in search of an audience to witness the experience of artmaking. Apology successfully blurred the lines between the makers and receivers of art. •

Linda Lilienfeld

Friend

The first time I met Allan—that big ol' lovable guy—he had just returned from the deep in Florida and was unpacking some beautiful coral and shells. We were surrounded in his apartment in Beverly Court in Washington, DC (must have been 1972ish) with his mathematical color work that seemed to take color and divide it mathematically by tone and hue and create shaped canvases and three-dimensional infrastructure. I had never really seen anything like it and thought he was a genius. He gave me a shell to keep. I have it to this day.

After many years at parties and get-togethers, we were in New York at the same time and I had just rented a house in Sag Harbor with Asa, my son. Allan and Marissa came out to visit to go SCUBA diving—why a nice Jewish guy would want to go scuba diving with all that gear was beyond me—but the two of them seem absorbed by it as if in a dream. We had a wonderful visit and delicious meals and friendship. Allan had left behind an audio cassette of his favorite country-western music: on it was the Texas Playboys, and the song was "Rolly Polly Daddy's Little Fatty."

Although our paths crossed a bit after that, when I think of Allan, and I think of him so much more often that I thought I might have—Oh Allan what a great spirit you are—I think of shells and math and Marissa and shaped-colored squares and "Daddy's Little Fatty." •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

We saw the number on a telephone pole advertisement in Manhattan in the Summer of 1982. She was working at Calvin Klein and I was working as a stage manager at the Wonderhorse theater on E. 4th Street and had just gotten a job on Wall Street. I remember the Apology Line because we were just cracking up at the some of the confessions made and after listening for what seemed like a very long time on the speakerphone to these confessions came our beep and my roommate picked up the phone and started apologizing because she was angry at her boyfriend because he wouldn't let her pee on him in the shower. For the longest period of time we were laughing, laughing, and then she just hung up the phone.

We kind of forgot about that and maybe about a month later we called. Tucked in there, just as funny as it was the day we recorded it, was her apology to him. I think that Mr. Apology made some wisecrack comment which was quite typical after that. I guess that my memories of the Apology Line will always be with me. It's a great thing, what a great idea, what a great body of research this has been. It has spurred a lot more than just the books and movies that have been written. Thanks, Mr. Apology. •

Message

Anonymous
Apology Line Caller

To Mr. Apology. I can't believe that you're dead. I can't believe you've gone on. I kind of hope that wherever you are you're still listening to us and listening to the Line. Thank you for everything and I wish that you hadn't gotten killed. I wish that you were still helping people. I wish that you were still alive. •

(continued on page 49)

Looking like Jesus in the mid '70s, even though he was an atheist.

The Art of Apology

By Peter Rippon

Artists come in a bewildering multiplicity of shapes and sizes. All are looking for a way to truly express themselves. Whether they use paint, sculpt stone, make photographs, movies, performance, or whatever. Of these, only a few ever find a means of "delivering" their message.

Allan Bridge found his medium of expression— the telephone! He realized that this piece of technological apparatus; a peculiarly twentieth century phenomenon, has done more, almost since the advent of the written word, to change the face of communication. Coupled with some creatively rigged tape machines, and eventually a computer, he used it in the same way a filmmaker uses a camera, or a painter his brushes and paint.

One of his interests was in human reaction and ways of effecting that reaction. His earlier artwork, particularly his sculptures, employed strategies to get people to somehow interact and give back, rather than just passively spectate. By creating Mr. Apology he served his artistic ends perfectly. Here was a way of doing all the things he had wanted to with other art forms; convey and gather hidden, personal, deeply felt information that was "true," because the participants—the callers—had no need to lie, as they were really talking to and confronting themselves! For even if the callers fabricated their confessions, they were actually saying, and receiving, more truths about themselves than they ever realized. Few paintings or sculptures, however moving, can ever hope to be as effective.

The beauty of the Apology Line is that it not only underlines people's frailties, inadequacies and faults; whether they are the infamous "Dick of Death" or just some schmo who kicked his dog. But, it also brings out the their strengths; particularly when some anonymous caller gives advice, or addresses someone else's problem or dilemma; they feel empowered by that same anonymity. This telephonic arena is what gives them the authority to act in such a fashion. Not much else around gives the same impetus to act positively. This is interactive creativity at its best; truly a "medium with a message"!

To go into a case by case analysis of what makes up the Apology Line serves little purpose at this juncture, fascinating as it might turn out to be. However, I believe I can relate something that few Apology callers ever had the opportunity of experiencing. And that is having a phone conversation with him, knowing that he was both Mr. Apology and Allan Bridge.

To receive a phone call from him was always an interesting experience. He would start by introducing himself quite formally, and then strike right at the heart of his reason for calling, no small talk, particularly if his question involved something that related to a current project or interest. I recall one conversation that had to do with my kids' need for an old TV set. He was replying to a message I left on his machine. Incidentally, there was always a kind of irony about leaving a message on his home number; I often felt I should finish the message by adding that I not only wanted him to get back to me about whatever, but I also wanted to have sex with his dog, or something else along those lines!

Anyway, our conversation progressed through why my kids wanted the TV-SEGA to whether, in his wonderful Aladdin's cave of a studio/workshop/office, he had such an item. Of course he did, and, if I could come and get it, he would do the necessary repairs required to make it function. The conversation then branched off into a typically Allan Bridge technical description of just how he would make the wretched machine function, complete with such questions as, "You know how if you push the aluminum part of the outside of a phono plug, just so, it will make contact with..." and somehow when he described it, you really could visualize it at that precise moment! After what seemed like hours of such banter, we sidetracked into the ethics of mindless computer game playing. Allan naturally loathed the apparently useless banality of such stuff, but paradoxically could give you a full descriptive explanation, with precise verbal illustrations, of exactly how, in the game of "Mortal Kombat" by doing such-and-such, you could defeat Kano in two moves!

(continued on page 37)

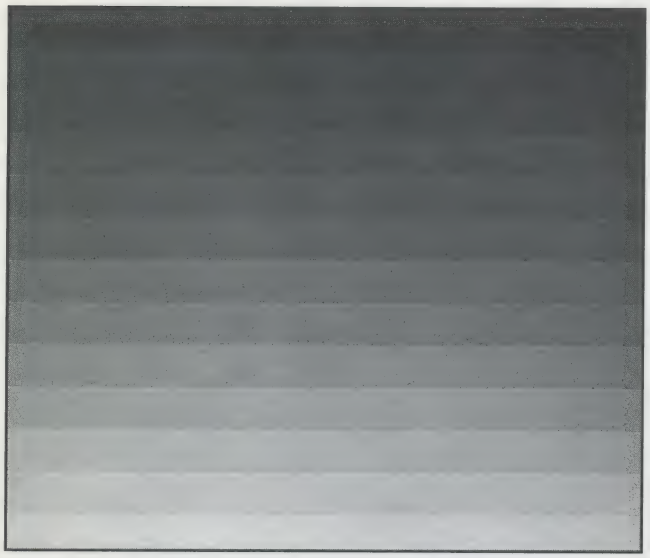
Mr. Apology in disguise with Crime Time machine.

"As a boy I formed the central conviction of my life: that individual consciousness dies with the body (brain). Although the widespread beliefs in reward and punishment after death may have some positive effect on human conduct, I think humaneness might increase if we simply accepted the brevity of individual life and focused on ways to make life on earth a more pleasant and relaxed experience for all.

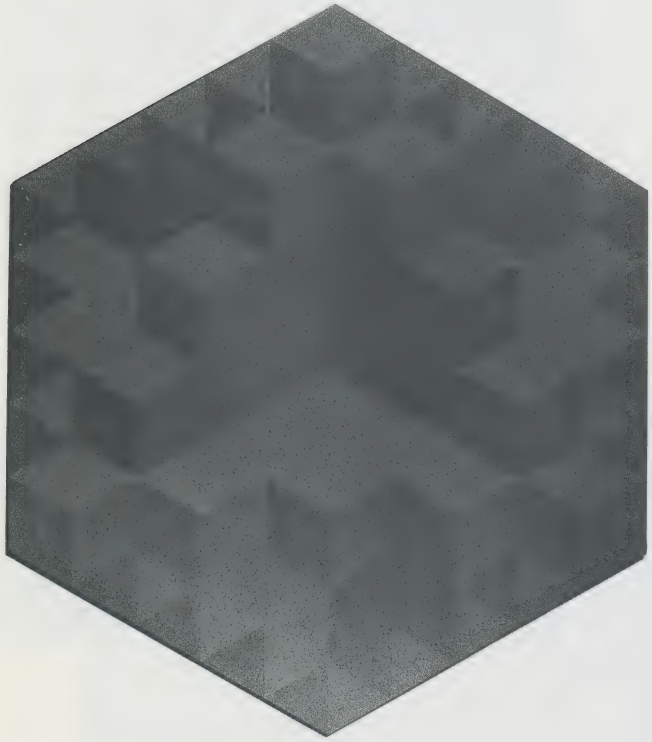
My machines confront the viewer with the issue of mortality and the sub-issues of how we use our limited time, energy, opportunities, significant relationships and resources." —Allan Bridge

Progression to Confession:

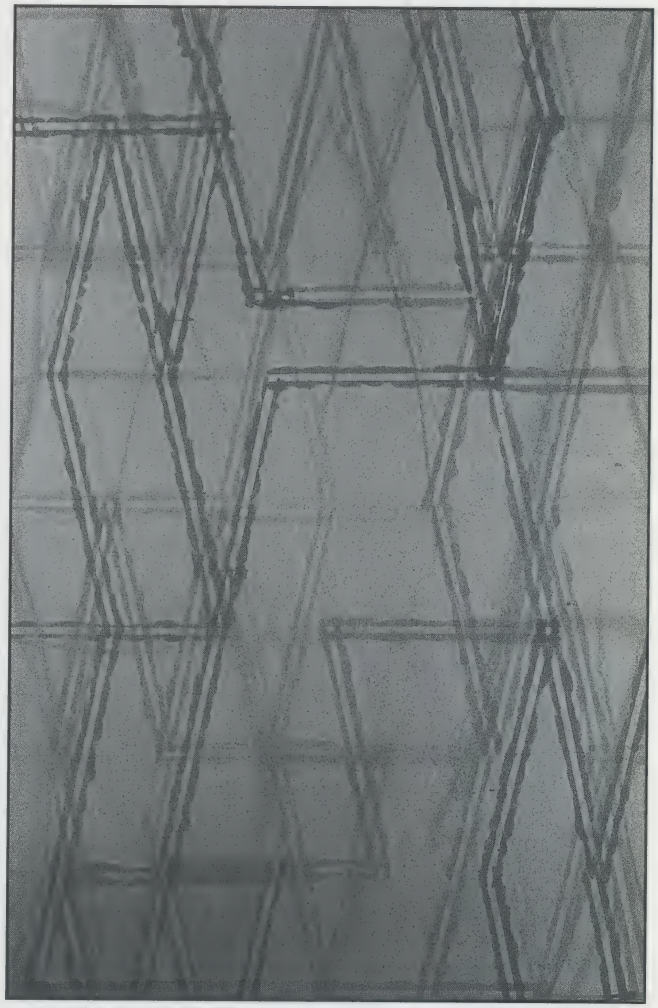
The Art



Chroma Series, Green
1972, 39" x 45", acrylic on canvas

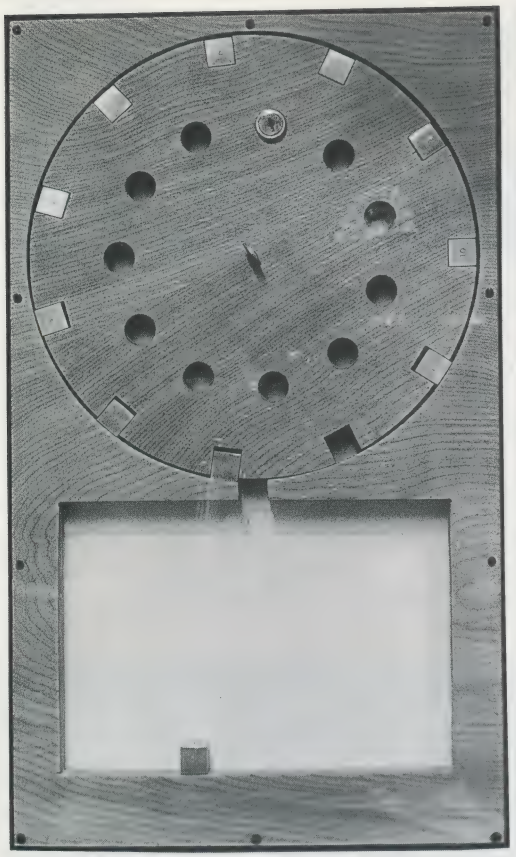


Desert Rose
1972, hexagon, 72" overall, acrylic on canvas



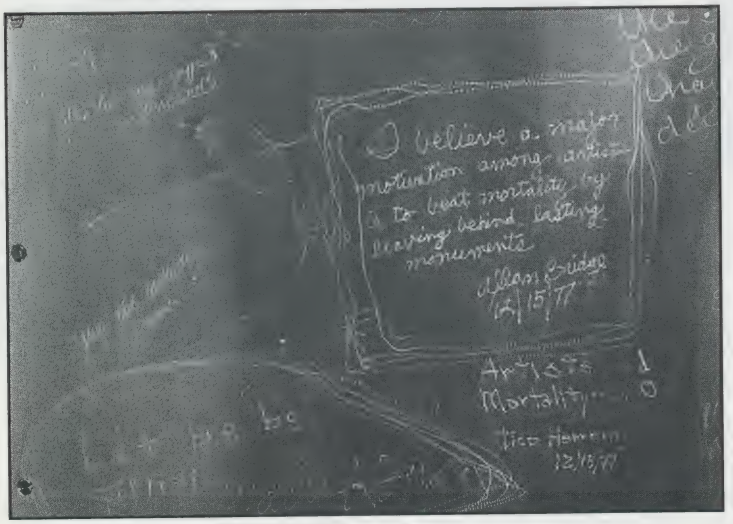
Orders #9
1974, 42" x 66", acrylic on canvas

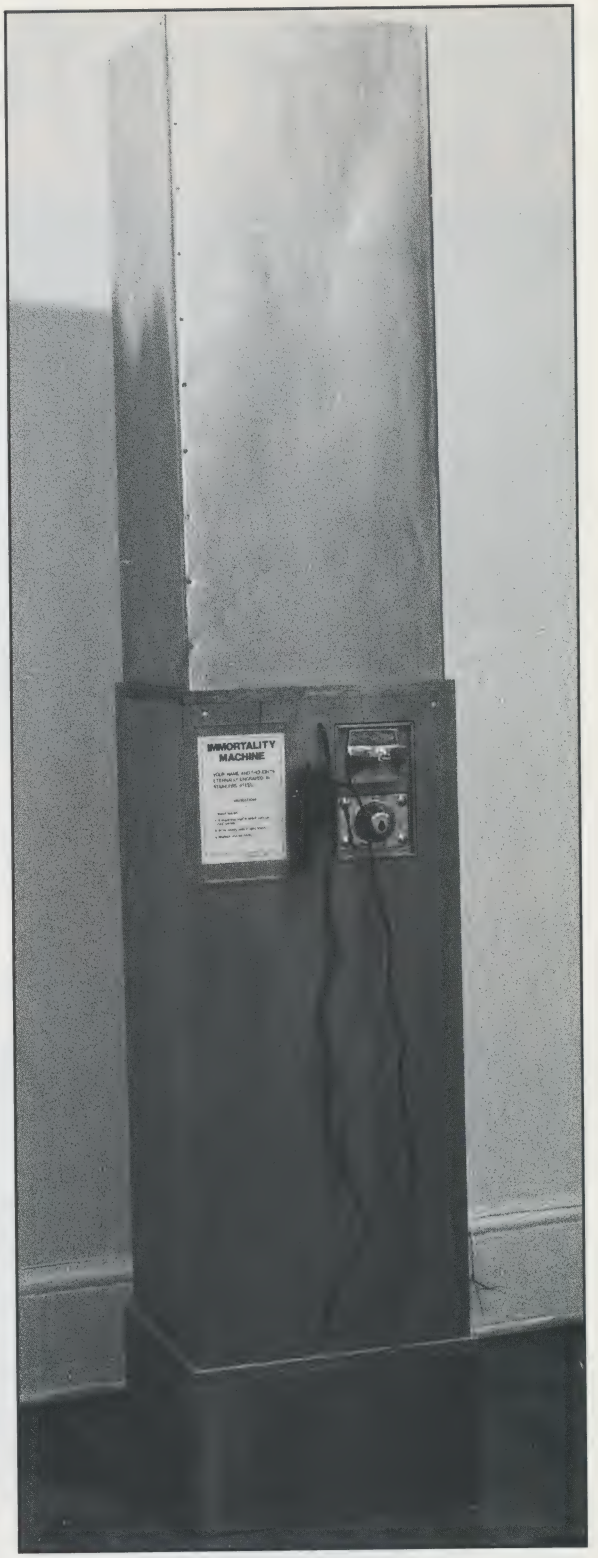
All art by Allan Bridge is the copyrighted property of the estate of the artist



Mortality Machine #1: Eleven Event Wheel
1974, 12"w x 20"h x 1"d,
plexiglas, birch, aluminum, lock, thumbscrew, screws

Immortality Machine
"Your name and thoughts eternally engraved in stainless steel. Instructions:
1. Insert quarter; 2. If engraving tool is silent turn on red switch; 3. Write slowly with a light touch; 4. Replace tool on hook."
1977, 15.5"w x 15.5"h x 78.25"d , stainless steel, birch, electric engraving tool



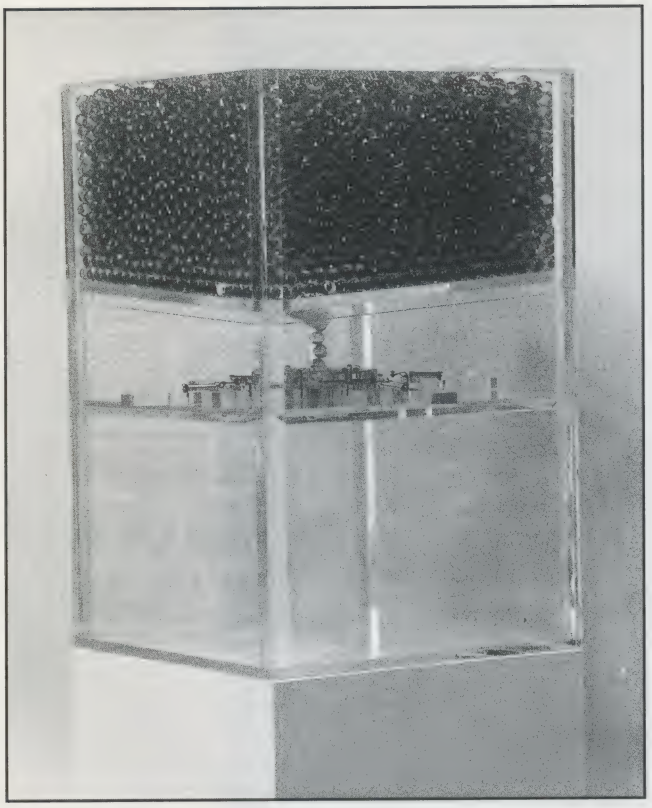


Close up of Allan's message on Immortality Machine:
"I believe a major motivation among artists is to beat mortality by leaving behind...lasting moments
Allan Bridge 12/5/77"

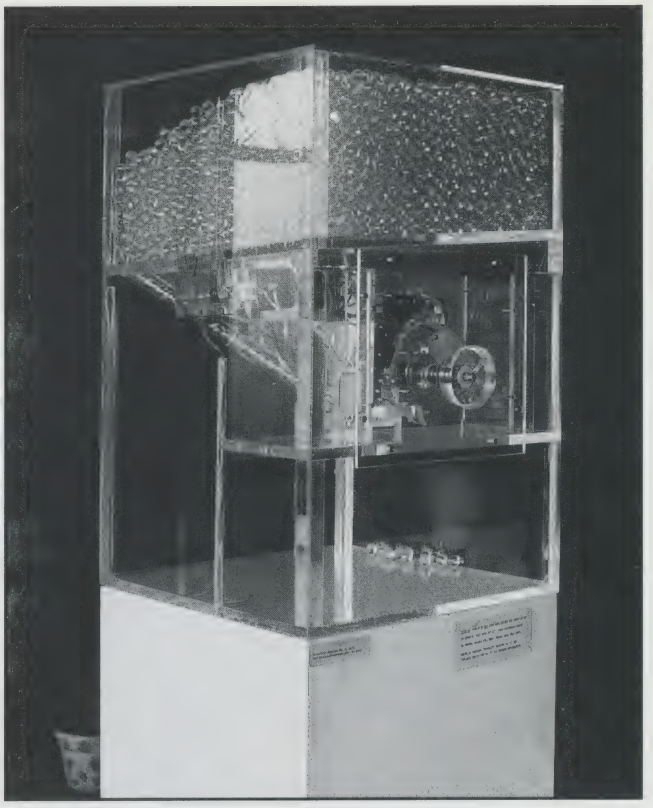
Entrance to Mr. Apology's workroom

Command Central *Mr. Apology's Lair*

CRIMINALS
APOLOGY

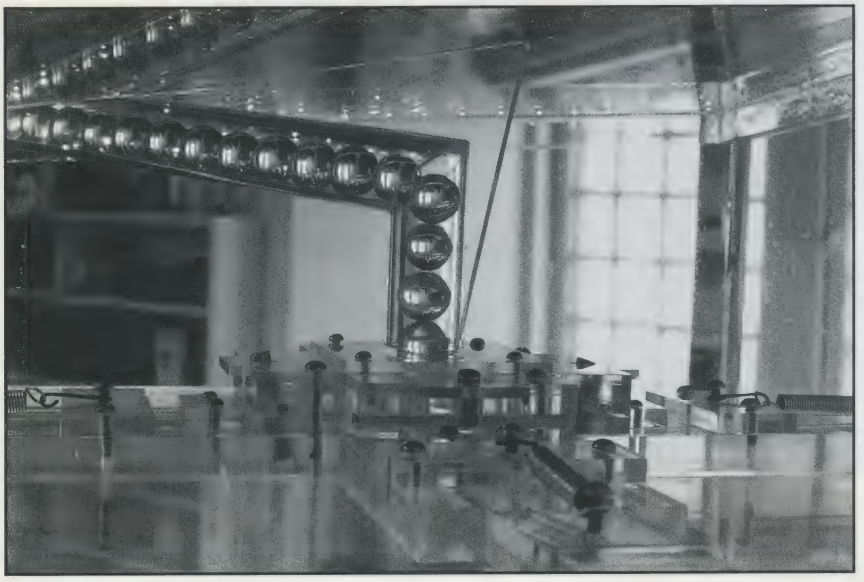


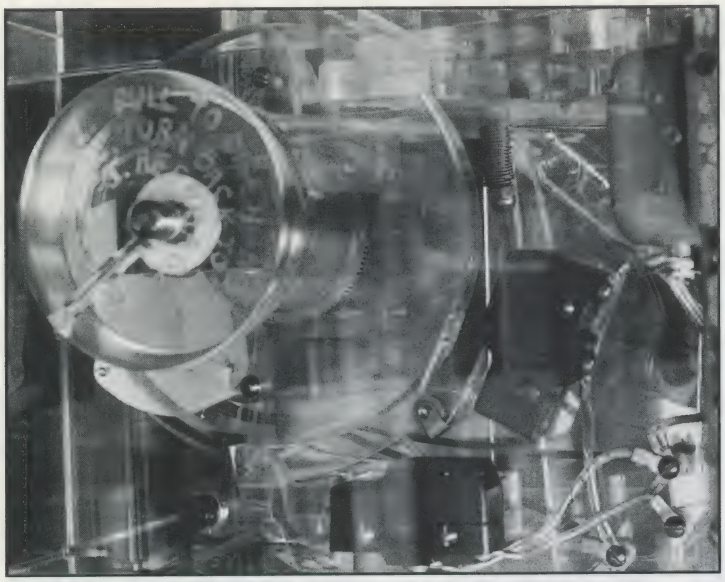
Mortality Machine #4
"Cooperation/Simultaneity"
Two people need to pull two of the four levers at the same time to cause a marble to fall.
1977, 15.25"w x 24"h x 15.25"d, plexiglas, marbles, brass, springs



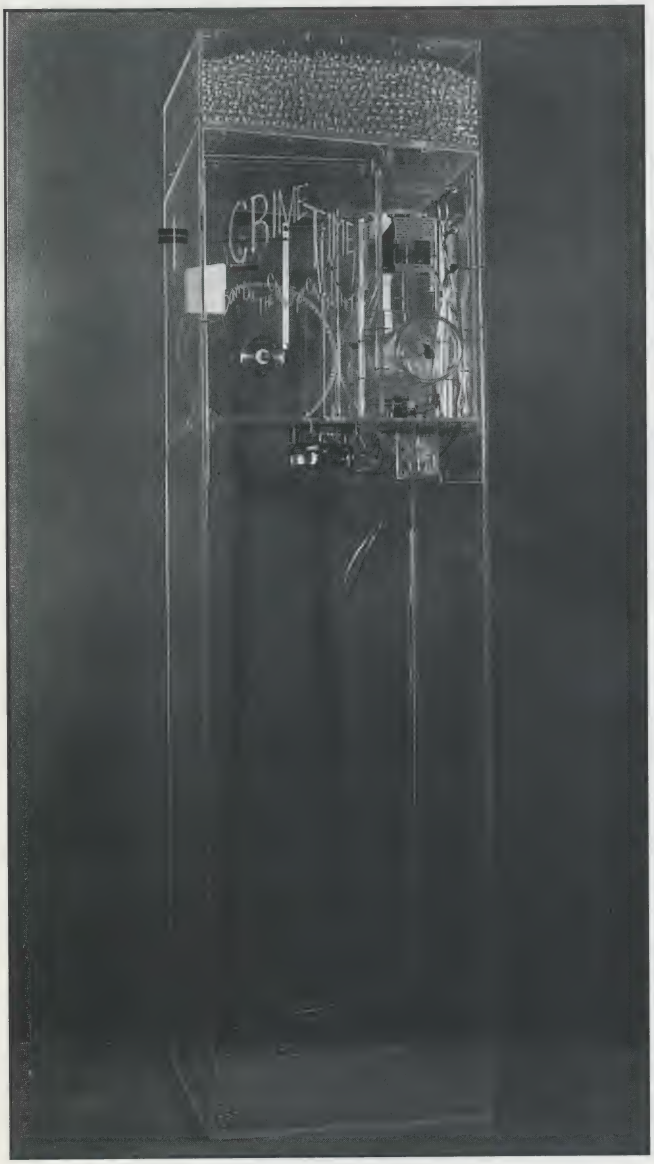
Mortality Machine #5
"Attention must be paid"
Wheel always turns clockwise. (One revolution takes one week). Task of owner is to turn back wheel at least once a week. This action causes one marble to fall. Failure to turn back wheel causes trap door to open, releasing all marbles at once. Marbles may not be replaced in upper compartment.
1977, 16"w x 25"h x 16"d, plexiglas, marbles, hardware, clock, solenoid, switches

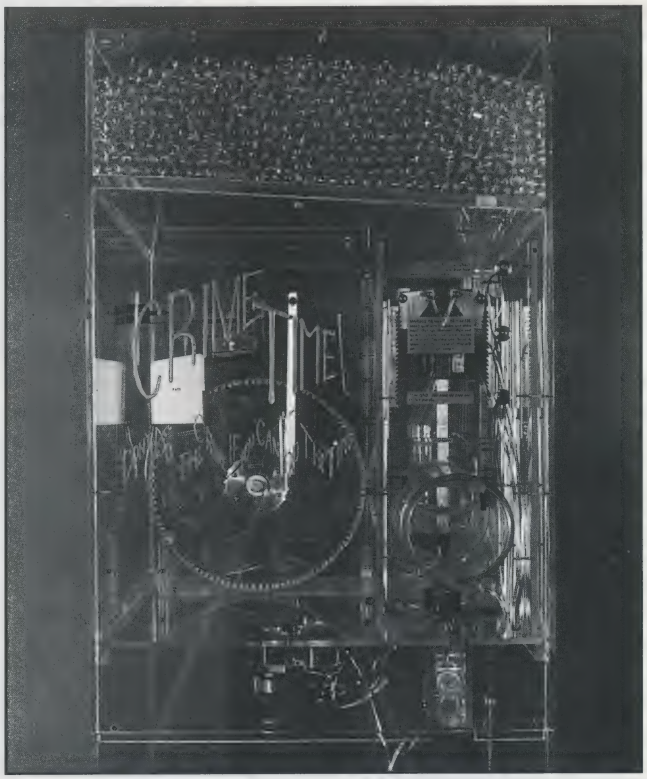
Mortality Machine #4 detail





Mortality Machine #5 detail





Crime Time detail

Crime Time
"Don't do the crime if you can't do the time"
User puts hand in machine and spins wheel of chance. Hand is either caught and held for 30 seconds in machine, or user wins marble.
1980, 17.5"w x 66.5"h x 19"d, plexiglas, marbles, hardware, solenoid, switches, wires

Outdoor installation of Apology Tapes, Washington Project for the Arts
Washington, D.C., 1982

Installation entitled, "Mr. Apology: Selected Radio Interviews, 1980-81"
Exhibited in *Persona* Show,
New Museum, New York City, 1981

Looking for Mr. Apology

I first met Allan Bridge in his Manhattan apartment in October 1993 to conduct the interview which follows. A friend in Montreal had called my attention to the *New Yorker* piece about the Apology Line, and I became intrigued by the anonymous "Mr. Apology" who had developed it. What kind of person would devote his time to listening, organizing, and publishing the confessions and intimate secrets of strangers? I was hooked.

I had for years spent my own time and energy collecting the letters, journals, diaries, and photos of people I did not know (which I was later, with Allan's encouragement, to turn into the Personal History Archives). I felt I understood something about the desire to connect with others—though at a distance—through the personal details of their lives. Gaining access to a person's hidden self is a fascinating and revealing process. It reveals as much of the person who's doing the uncovering as of the one being uncovered.

I was determined to find the man behind the low, comforting rumble that was the voice of Mr. Apology, but the amount of information one can uncover about a person in an afternoon's conversation over ham and cheese sandwiches is limited. I did find out that Allan was a warm, dedicated, generous and complex man; and one of the privileged few of us that manages to turn a personal interest into a full-time avocation. He provided a service beneficial to thousands in the process—and genuinely cared for those who used it. This is further testimony to the potential for a successful marriage between altruism and introspection.

What I will remember and cherish most about Allan is his dedication to pay tribute to the lives of the everyday people he never met but encountered in indirect but powerfully intimate ways. I hope this interview, transcribed with minimal editing, provides a glimpse of the man behind Mr. Apology.

Interview by Steve Kokker

Steve Kokker: What did you learn about people that surprised you most after you started this project?

Allan Bridge: I started the Apology Line two years after moving to New York from Washington. In the white, middle-class sector where I grew up, there wasn't much crime. It was a clean, nice place and people were middle-class normal, if you know what I mean. New York was always this big, dark entity for me. I was more or less alone at that point in my life and I'd always been fascinated by what was going on in people's lives, behind what you'd see on the streets, and I wanted an inroad to it. Up to then I'd been an habitual shoplifter and was feeling quite guilty about it. It just about stopped by the time I got to New York.

Anyways, I was going through all these changes in my life—the move, the contrast between the scuzziness of my petty crimes and the supposed purity of being an artist—purity of thought anyways, not necessarily of lifestyle! So I did this confessional kind of art piece for myself which made me feel better, and I figured that I could develop some sort of a system whereby people could confess and try to turn over a new leaf. I was interested in the notion of the criminal, this character who breaks the social contract. You know, all those college, sociological ideas of the criminal dating back to Rousseau and Locke. And no one had ever tried something like this before, so it seemed like a fresh idea. Some of the early calls were very compelling partly because it was such a new thing.

So to get back to your question, what surprised me about people? Not much, really. I'd always had a pretty black view of human nature, and I don't think it got any blacker or whiter. It sort of confirmed my best and worst thoughts about people. I expected some would get pissed at me for saying that they owed an apology.

Were you surprised at the great need for such a service, or the passion with which people called and called again?

I felt that there would be a need for it, because, except for the Catholic Church, there's no set-up for confession in our society. And the range of telephone services and help lines just weren't around in 1980. Maybe what took me aback was the degree of anger some callers felt towards me for even having set it up—I'd get threats. People would call up and say, "I know you're connected with the FBI or CIA." Or they'd say, "What right do you have to ask me for an apology? If I need money I just go out and get it!" Stuff like that. One guy who called up made this elaborate confession

of his crimes and then said, "Well, I feel so much better, now I can go and commit other crimes! You've done me a great service!"

Did that bother you?

Yeah, and it underlined a fundamental flaw in the whole concept of confession as well as the Apology system, the fact that by getting misdeeds off your chest, you can either turn over a new leaf, or clean the slate and start all over again.

Did you ever think, "Wow, I'm getting in too deep, I'm actually affecting people?"

Well yeah. I remember getting a call early on from this guy who said he enjoyed mugging homosexuals, and that he'd actually killed one. The call coincided with a front-page *Village Voice* story about a series of muggings and murders of homosexuals in the West Village. A friend of one of the victims saw a transcript of this guy's calls to Apology in *The Soho News* and contacted the police, who then contacted me. This was only a month or two after I'd started the Line so I hadn't figured out what my moral obligations to the calls or callers should be, what my role to the police should be, etc.

It's problematic. There's a certain amount of responsibility that falls on the person making the call—there are methods they can take to protect themselves, like not using their real name and calling from a payphone. My job is to publish the stuff, get the information out, and the police can listen to or read it like everyone else. That's how I rationalize it.

I'm a bit jaded about the New York Police Department anyways—if you have a body they'll look at it, but a telephone conversation isn't of great interest to them. But I guess I'm not beyond bringing something to the police's attention. I'd just feel like it was a betrayal. I mean, there is a point where I would react—if someone called and said, "Hey, I'm torturing this little kid," and I heard the cries in the background and believed they were real, for example.

Do any calls scare or disturb you, or have you become pretty much inured to them?

The threatening calls are disturbing, and I still get some. One guy has been calling since 1984, making threatening statements. At one point he figured out the mechanics of my answering machine system and actually would change my outgoing message. I had to reprogram the access code. He's someone who gets my goat. He's one of the reasons I've chosen to remain anonymous all this time, even though half of me would like not to be. This is the kind of guy who could end up stalking me.

You could become the object of someone's fixation.

Yes. It's very poignant at times. Some people imbue me with the powers of a Father Confessor, which I'm not. Like this one girl who called up from Charlottesville, Virginia and solemnly apologized to a Sheriff Brown or somebody, as well as to Mr. Apology.

I grew up in Virginia, and I did awful things there. Here's this girl who only stole a few signs and she's apologizing to me, and *I've* never gotten right with the State of Virginia! I felt almost guilty about that. [laughs] When I was a kid out in the suburbs, I'd get into some horrible stuff. Like, I'd make a huge sling and put big rocks in it and hurl them towards a highway until I hit a car. Truly sociopathic! I can't believe I did that kind of stuff!

But in terms of how others see me, it's not too hard to keep my ego under control. I have no desire to be a David Koresh or any kind of cult leader. I don't have any of that in me—I don't even like to stand up in front of people. But there is a kind of ego rush of being the person that some people confess to. On the other hand, I see myself as a loose canon, certainly not a morally superior figure. I don't have great moral courage or anything. So I see it as more of a peer relationship than anything, a communion of wrongdoers, large and petty, rather than Mr. Morally Superior who will listen to and perhaps forgive you!

Do you think that one of the reasons you started the Apology project was for your own atonement, in that you can sort of confess through other people's confessions?

There was one female caller who asked me, "So, who do you confess to? I used to occasionally call up the Line myself. I haven't in a few years, though I sometimes get the urge to do it. When I do use the Line myself I feel like I'm not confessing anonymously, but to people who know me very well, seeing as the callers are so familiar with my voice. I feel a bit embarrassed about making my own confessions on the Line.

But does the Line continue to be a way for you to vicariously confess, or work out elements of your past?

Definitely. Like the way I identified with the girl from Virginia. I mean, I used to put nails in wooden boards, lay them out in the road, go hiding in the woods, and watch cars get flat tires. It wasn't on a big curve or anything, but still, it was an awful thing to do. So when someone makes a similar, bad-adolescent kind of confession, I certainly identify with that. Those things I used to do haunt me and give me the urge to confess at times.

Do you ever feel that you use the project as a substitute for a real confession, though? Without really dealing with the issues that bother you directly?

Well, one thing that comes to mind is the fact that since this project takes a lot of my time, I don't pay sufficient attention to my wife. I disappear into the back room for hours, days on end, which is a kind of emotional neglect—which I'm occasionally reminded of. So there's a kind of avoidance there. But, given my personality, if I had another kind of activity, like painting, I might do the same thing, lose myself in it. That's probably true of men in general, though. It's just the way we've been brought up, to be job-oriented, making it OK to lose ourselves in our work.

There is a voyeuristic pleasure that comes from listening to the intimate details of people's lives, and that can be strongly thrilling at times. If someone is confessing to the point of tears, it can be an emotional experience just listening to it. The system itself becomes a trap for those kinds of

emotions. And just like a fur trapper may have a mix of horror and exhilaration when he realizes what he's caught; when I hear an extremely emotional confession, I feel a shared pain but there's also the exhilaration of success. It is still thrilling to be able to look into the deeper recesses of someone's mind.

Do you ever feel like you're living through some of the things you listen to, stuff you wouldn't necessarily do yourself or just wouldn't have an opportunity to?

Sometimes...a little bit. For example, as I've been married now for nine years and am monogamous, I can allow myself to safely live out some of the wild sex lives of some of the callers. And there's also the thrill of being the outlaw—the kind of life I don't live any more—that yearning to be free. [laughs] I've never been a master criminal, but it seems to me it would be a fun thing to do. [laughs] As long as no one gets hurt.

Were you raised Catholic, by any chance?

No, and I'm pretty much areligious. But I have thought about what psychological factors could have lead to my developing this project. One aspect—well, maybe it's not terribly deep—was that awareness which most people have at some point that humanity is in fact capable of committing atrocities. This creates a dilemma in one's mind as it contrasts so greatly with the everyday goodness of people that you encounter. I mean, where I grew up you didn't even lock your doors. So I did experience a quest to understand the black side of human nature.

Another factor was the permissiveness of the community I was raised in. I was from a white, middle-class background and I realized that the authorities seemed to come down primarily on the misbehaviors of minority groups. There was a lot of racism there. So I got away with a lot. I think that a lot of the stealing I did as a kid was partly testing these boundaries. So, I think that stopping shoplifting around the same time as starting this project was all part of realizing that I had to control myself and develop a real sense of responsibility.

The one time I do remember getting caught—I was in the 7th grade—this cop took down my name and phone number in the shop where I was caught. I spent that night at home in abject fear waiting for the call. But it never came. It was a kind of punishment being terrorized waiting for the call, but not much of one. I grew up in an environment that was kind, there was no connection between actions and consequences. Probably it would have been better for me if the cop had called my parents. But out of laziness or kindness, he never did.

Somehow it seems funny that after all these year, you still call the Apology Line a "project."

As opposed to what? It's not a job! There's certainly no paycheck. An obsession? "Hobby" doesn't quite get it either...maybe "avocation." It's kind of like finding out I was called by God to do it, except that I wasn't—at least not that I know of. Yeah, it's kind of like I was called by God, except that I don't believe in God. [laughs] •

Personal History Archives

ARCHIVES D'HISTOIRE PERSONELLE

Be Part of History

Don't throw your diaries or old letters out! Your life is interesting to us. Non-profit archives preserves journals, scrapbooks, photo albums. Excerpts or complete sets, copies or originals. Any format, any length accepted. Photocopies or originals. Anonymous excerpts exchanged upon request. Privacy assured. c/o Personal History Archives, PO Box 273, Station Westmount, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 2T2, CANADA.

ART, continued from page 26

Talking with him on the phone was a delightful time-consuming operation that invariably left you both educated and frustrated. One day, or example, we were both working on a construction job together and I called him from the lobby of the building to find out what he wanted for lunch. Following his sandwich request, he proceeded, for three quarters of an hour, to explain how radio waves function! That we were both losing time and money as a result made no difference, it was a great conversation! I really miss him; he was the only person I know who could tell me how to hook up an illegal cable box and whether Kierkegaard would approve or not!

Finally, the overall view of Allan Bridge, the artist. Tragically, I believe, had he lived and carried out innovations within the structure of the Apology network, quite definitely there would be a niche for him right there with the Andy Warhols, the Robert Mapplethorpes and many others who have challenged and stretched the parameters of traditional art. There may be anyway.

As far as *Apology Magazine* is concerned, his literary ambitions fit right in with the new postmodern, Avant-Pop writers. *Apology Magazine* actually depicts and describes the world that writers such as Mark Amerika (*The Kafka Chronicles*, *Sexual Blood* and *Alt-X*), Craig Baldwin ("Tribulation 99: Alien Anomalies Under America") and others, fictionalize. Anyone who can write "the intention is to pursue the truths of who we are so we can have a fuller picture of human nature, be more accepting of it, and make better and fairer judgment about it" (*Apology*, Vol.1, #2) in one breath, and "...(a) I eat what I kill, (b) they are pretty much the same animals I buy chopped up in grocery stores, and (c) they aren't people" (*Apology* Vol.3, #2) in another, sure as hell deserves attention from every angle! •

The Persona Show

The New Museum, New York City, Fall 1981

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The following is excerpted from the New Museum *Persona* catalog. The show, which was curated by Lynn Gumpert and Ned Rifkin, featured nine artists whose works encorporated the idea of "Persona," one of who was Allan Bridge as Mr. Apology. As the catalog explains: *"Persona* explores the territory of the surrogate self, alter ego, disguise or alias." This was one of Allan's first exhibitions in New York City.

In late October 1980, an anonymous artist posted printed signs in Manhattan soliciting criminals to repent their "misdeeds" by calling a designated number and speaking into a telephone answering tape machine.This poster explained that Apology, as the project was titled, "is a private experiment [whose] sole purpose is to provide a new avenue of communication."

There was an immediate flood of calls from an extremely wide range of people. Some callers expressed gratitude for the service provided by this project. Others vented contempt and hostility. Several violent threats were made against Apology's creator. The responses ran the gamut from hardened criminals who manifested little or no remorse for their wrongs, to non-criminals who needed to confess an act of betrayal, an illicit sexual relation, or other feelings of guilt.

The press quickly caught wind of the more sensational aspects of the responses. Typically, the [New York] *Daily News* titled its story "I Confess," and ran a caption reading, "A New York Artist opens a Guilt Hotline and is in Danger of Being Burned." In an attempt to respect the artist's need for anonymity but desiring a name which would reflect his efforts at "saving" these people, a reporter from *The Soho News* referred to him as "Chris." Before another month passed, a writer for *The Washington Post*, whose feature on the project was syndicated internationally, dubbed the unknown artist "Mr. Apology." Suddenly calls began coming in from across the Atlantic as well as from wherever the story ran in the United States and Canada. Moreover, in a period of only six weeks, "Mr. Chris Apology" had evolved as a public persona for this anonymous artist whose simple poster had been placed in subway stations and on walls throughout New York City. Ironically, the persona has reached back in time. Because a widely published article described some of his sculptures that had preceded the Apology project, when they were selected to be shown in a recent exhibition, he decided to include them under his recently adopted pseudonym.

One of these sculptures was designed as a machine to engage the viewers in a "gum-ball" type of game in which random factors could result in their being "captured," literally held by a manacle-like device, so that one "does time." His interest in building these machines involved intricate concepts of mortality, risk, freedom, and punishment. As the artist has stated, "I'm definitely into art that punishes the public a little bit." His need to punish the art viewer is prompted by the imbalance he believes exists between the artist who actively creates the work and the public that passively views it.

It was only a short step from constructing these crime machines to employing a "found machine"—the telephone. The thrust of Apology is that it sets up a public "secular confessional," as the artist terms it, via the most available means of mass communication. The use of the telephone answering tape machine adds a particularly contemporary flavor to the piece. As Apology's poster advises, "When you call you will be alone with a tape recorder." The artist has also provided the callers with the option to be contacted by him personally for a taped interview. A caller speaks with the understanding that while the tape is made in absolute privacy, it will be aired publicly at some time in the future.

There is, then, a heightened self-consciousness, a possibility for listening to oneself as a performer might. In a certain sense, the knowledge of the recorder, and the projected public playback, creates a situation wherein the callers could find themselves in persona. Conversely, their need to personalize the machine, and by extension Chris Apology, stems from the necessity to normalize their participation in this unusual project. This curious public-private dialectic is an essential element of Apology as both a conceptual art piece and as a work of social and political consequence.

The concept for the project evolved out of Chris Apology's own childhood experiences as a petty thief. He recalls that, even as a five-year-old child, he aspired to be a burglar. As he matured and became increasingly involved in misdemeanors, he began to recognize the universal condition that criminality represents. To some degree, Apology regards the criminal as a victim of society's injustices. He makes the analogy between the artist and the criminal: both are pariahs, needing to take risks.

Within the present context of the exhibition, Apology holds a unique position on the spectrum of personae. Initially he felt it necessary to remain anonymous for the sake of his personal safety. Gradually, through press coverage and his desire to become more directly involved with many of the calls Apology has emerged as a "reverse persona." Moreover, in at least one instance, he himself has phoned in a statement to the Apology number.

In addition, he has explained that he feels an enormous sense of freedom when interviewed over the telephone by radio disc-jockeys. Speaking from Manhattan to points as

far away as New Zealand, he finds himself in a position of complete anonymity, able to say anything or be anyone he desires. Using his telephone and the station's broadcasting equipment, he has devised a means to actually transmit tapes over live radio from his loft.

It is Apology's belief that "the rapid evolution of electronic communications has tended to broaden access to public consciousness." He adds:

"Many would argue that criminals should have no voice in society. I say that these outsiders comprise a large segment of the population and cannot be ignored for reasons of safety and moral conscience. Furthermore, I simply want to know what such people have to say."

By conceiving and implementing the Apology project, Chris Apology has given these people, as well as many others, a voice in the public domain. One of the inadvertent returns on the investment of his time and money has been his ascribed persona. Considering the etymology of the word "persona" within this context, one can argue that this is the most literal and, in a sense, the most contemporary persona of all: the telephone being the object through which the artist speaks.

Artist's Statement

Last night I sat down to write this statement and I didn't get very far. I thought I would try to differentiate my personality from that of Mr. Apology, but the task proved formidable. I went to bed. This morning I had the first dream about Apology I can remember having. The dream was long and winding and I can't recall the first episodes, but I will recount the last two.

It is a rocky shore at night and I am bundled up in an overcoat and my arms are full of things carried from the previous unremembered scene. I step easily off the rocks into the water and bob to the surface. (In waking life I have been a skin diver and I view rocky shores more with fascination than with fear.) A strong current pulls me out from the shore and I am in danger. My arms are useless since they must hold whatever it is I carry. I shout to people who are near the shore. They are alarmed but the emergency subsides as the current takes me in a great circle back to the shore.

The people are young, athletic, well-acquainted with each other, and speak in a foreign language. They take little notice of me and I feel isolated and ludicrous in my wet clothes. I return home where I also find strangers. Perhaps they accompanied me.

The telephone rings. It is situated in a bookcase which partitions my bedroom from my living room; it is accessible from either room. A male stranger sitting on my bed answers it. The call is for Mr. Apology. I expect to be handed the receiver but the stranger is content to handle the call by himself. I can hear the voice coming over the phone. It's Groucho Marx! Damn! My chance to be on "You Bet Your Life!" and this jerk is in my way. I demand the phone but the stranger refuses. He finishes the conversation with smug enjoyment. I'm furious and challenge his presence and his actions. He challenges my right to do what I do, and points to the weapons next to my bed. (Some months ago after receiving some threatening phone calls I decided to keep an old air rifle and a broken revolver handy.) I tell him that the rifle is only for bluffing an intruder. He picks up the nickel-plated revolver and nervously tries to load it. I see the bullets are penlight batteries and I grab him. I tell him, "I want to kill you, but I'm not going to kill you. Do you understand? Now get out!"

This is all I remember about the dream. This morning a song runs through my head. It was written by Elvis Costello and goes something like,

There's a stranger in my house/ Nobody knows him/ But everybody says he looks like me.

My anonymity is a sensible safety precaution in this project and also maintains a symmetry with the caller's anonymity. A name can be a mere tag or it can embody, imply, or suggest. When more than a tag, a name has a life of its own, and affects the way the associated noun is perceived. I have asked myself, "What is Mr. Apology like or what should Mr. Apology be like?" My basic answer is, "Since I wear Mr. Apology's shoes, Mr. Apology is just like me, only slightly more alert, focused, attentive, receptive, empathetic, and responsible." Mr. Apology does not profess solutions, although he will examine his own experience and feelings in an attempt to help. When Mr. Apology is off-duty he is just like me, and he will publicly admit to my particular set of foibles. Mr. Apology has gone on record in various interviews as a former shoplifter, a moderate drug user, an occasional masturbator, a possible tax evader, and a sexual experimenter. In fact Mr. Apology has revealed more about me than I have revealed about myself, except to several of my closest confidants. I have certainly used Mr. Apology for my own confessional purposes. ●

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Sorry, Sis

An Apology by Gordon Chaplin

The most exciting feeling I know is the first flash of recognition. It can lead to many other things—love, friendship, art, money—but I don't think anything important starts without it. There's no way it can be faked: it's either there, or not. It can happen with a person—either the same or opposite sex—a thing, a place, an idea, or an action. It's a sudden understanding that you have something in common with whatever it is, that it's part of you (or that you're part of it), that it's speaking to you in a language you understand, that it comes from the same family you do.

I had this feeling listening to Mr. Apology (who I knew as Allan Bridge, the boyfriend of my boss) on the topic of shoplifting back in the '60s. He'd go into a supermarket wearing a full-length coat, the inside of which would be lined with hooks. He'd take things from the shelves and hang them from the hooks until he looked like the Michelin Man. Then he'd pick up a quart of milk and a head of lettuce and make his was ponderously through the checkout counters. He was a starving artist, and there was no doubt some economic imperative at work, but the way his eyes shone when he told this story caused me to have this feeling. Shoplifting made him guilty and proud at the same time, it made his heart beat faster, and it also touched his funnybone. Same here. And for both of us it was just the outer layer of the onion.

Who would have thought there was a way to turn our mutual love of life beyond the pale into art? Well...there's Beavis and Butthead, but are they art? Maybe not. What is art, anyway? This question brings us full circle: art's something that not only comes from, but also produces that flash of recognition. The greater the art, the more people feel it.

The brilliant idea of providing a public forum for us all to apologize for what we've done (or imagined doing) is just that. Even I—who on one Peace Corps psychological profile tested lowest on guilt out of the entire group of 90 volunteers—have been deeply bothered by some of the impulses going through my mind. And some of the impulses I've acted on.

So I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize, because it's probably the last one I'll ever have.

I've raped my sister. We never had intercourse, never even touched each other: it was a rape of the mind.

It started with teasing. I was four years older than her, and a boy. I had all the physical advantages. I can remember one vivid scene: we're standing on the stairs in our house, on the landing halfway up where there's a window facing the back of the house and the stairs continue in the opposite direction. I'm holding something—I don't remember what—just out of her reach. We're maybe eight and four. It's something she wants desperately. I almost let her have it, and then pull it away.

"Don't tease her," she says, her hands reaching out for whatever it was. "Don't tease her." It's what our parents always used to tell me.

The way she parrots them enrages me. "Don't tease *me*," I say, moving the thing farther away from her. "You're saying it *wrong*."

We're standing around in our backyard in a summer thunderstorm, our thin clothes soaked. I'm sixteen, she's twelve. Her breasts have started to develop, and the buds of her nipples show through her jersey. Hula Hoops were the rage then, and she's proudly demonstrating her technique in the heavy, cool downpour, swivelling hips as the hoop goes round and round her waist. "I used to be able to make it go all the way up my body," she says. "But now it hurts."

"Why does it hurt?" I ask, almost angrily.

She doesn't say anything.

"I bet you can't make it go up," I say. "Let's see you."

The rain is falling harder now, and the intervals between the lightning flashes and peals of thunder are getting shorter and shorter. She raises her arms over her head, still gyrating, and the hoop starts to climb up her body. "Ow," she says proudly. "It *really* hurts."

"No, it doesn't," I say. "There's nothing there. I can't see anything."

"Yes, there is," she says. "I've got to stop right now. It's killing me. What if we get hit by lightning?"

"Just keep going," I say. "How can it hurt if you don't have anything? I'm timing you. Maybe you can set a new record. If we get hit by lightning it's because we're supposed to die."

I can see her now in the falling rain, gyrating not so proudly until a new record is set.

Christmas with our parents in Philadelphia. I'm 30, she's 26. We're both married, and have brought our spouses and children, but that didn't stop us from having a marathon situp competition on the living room rug on Christmas eve after dinner. We stopped at 300 apiece, because our tailbones had been worn raw.

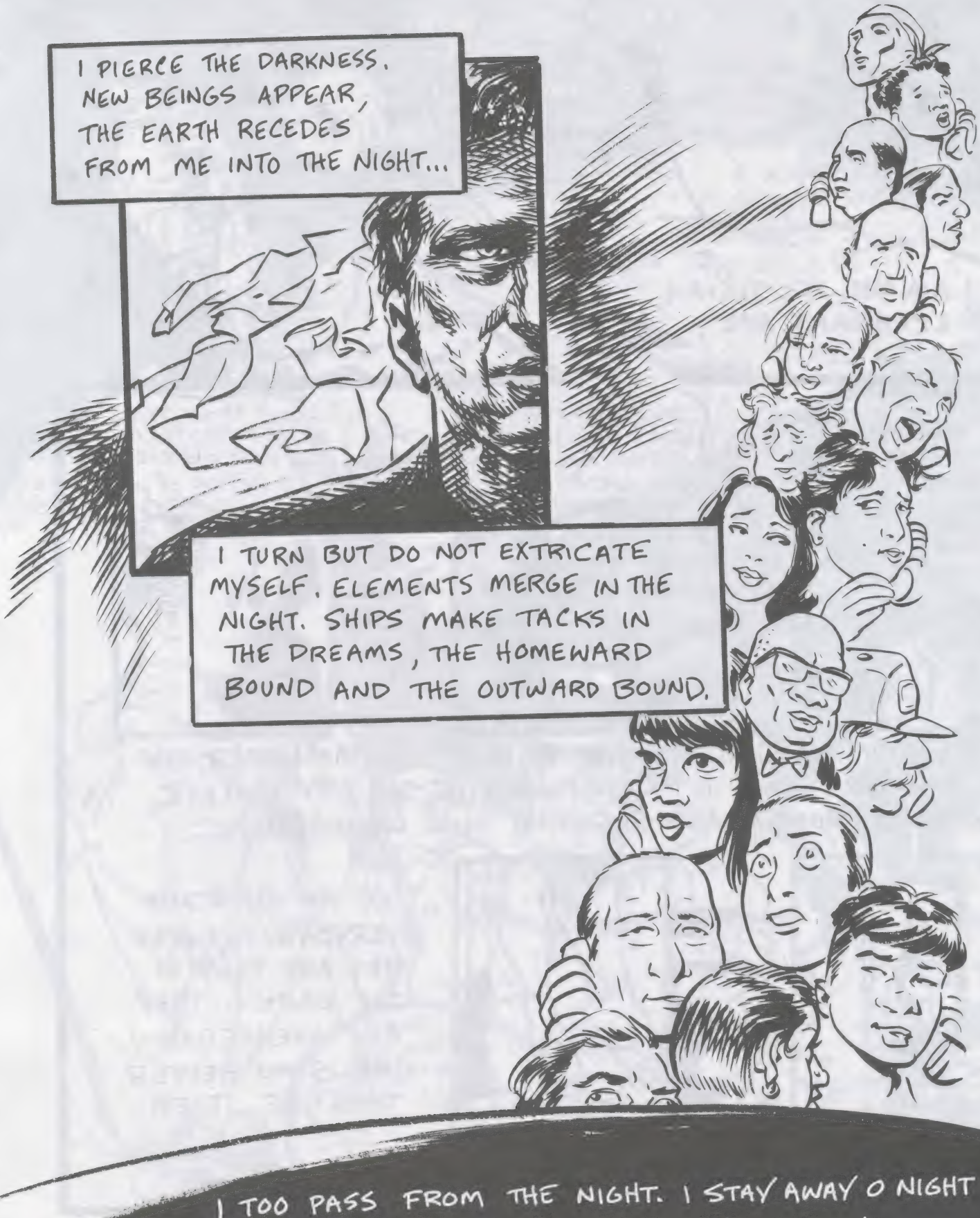
Now we're on a ten-mile Christmas Day run shoulder to shoulder around the dim gray December roads. With half a mile left to go she begins to pick up the pace. I stay with her for a while. We stop talking. The only sound (all the neighbors are inside with their families) is our hoarse panting as she gradually pulls ahead, in spite of everything I can do.

She's about 100 yards in the lead when she reaches the driveway to our house and stops. I roar past her, up the driveway, across the lawn to the porch, another 100 yards. "That wasn't the end," I call back in a choking voice, sweat burning the raw skin on my ass. "The run stops here. You lost."

We meet in southern Costa Rica to surf. Now we're in our 40s. She has two Ironman competitions under her belt: a 2.5-mile ocean swim, followed by a 100-mile bike race, followed by a 26.5-mile marathon—the world's most gruelling physical competition. She has participated in the first all-female ascent of the north face of the Grand Teton, and routinely kayaks wild, whitewater rivers such as the Salmon and the Snake. Her trainer has tried to interest her in body-building competitions, but she balked at taking the necessary steroids.

(continued on page 45)

It was a night like any other: a stretch of time in a small room looking out over the city. The traffic in the street below beaten down to a dull roar, a wind raking through the Avenues blowing up dust, newspaper, brown bags, skirts... The calls keep coming. The lights on the monitor like the lights of the city; every light a story. And behind every story a face crading a receiver. And every face a bit of decomposed light the universe began with a bang in...One man awake listens: nervesnap, eyeblink, heartbeat...
Mr. Apology.
REC PLY
He put a foot out,
and then the other,
then the first again,
until he was walking...
GLUTTONY
GREED
ENVY
ANGER
LUST
SLOTH
PRIDE
STORY & ART CY MURPHY & MR.C.


I PIERCE THE DARKNESS.
NEW BEINGS APPEAR,
THE EARTH RECEDES
FROM ME INTO THE NIGHT...
I TURN BUT DO NOT EXTRICATE
MYSELF. ELEMENTS MERGE IN THE
NIGHT. SHIPS MAKE TACKS IN
THE DREAMS, THE HOMEWARD
BOUND AND THE OUTWARD BOUND.

I TOO PASS FROM THE NIGHT. I STAY AWAY O NIGHT
BUT I RETURN TO YOU AGAIN AND LOVE YOU.

SORRY, continued from page 40

Her body is solid muscle. Mine is not. She could outrun me, outswim me, outcycle me if I went up against her. But can she outsurf me? So far she hasn't been able to find a way to beat me to her satisfaction.

We sail across the Golfo Dulce to a remote surf spot on Osa Peninsula unreachable except by sea. The waves are perfect, about six feet on the face and shaped so that even East Coast late-starters like my sister and I can ride them with no problem. Best of all, there's only a handful of other surfers there to compete with. Huge as the ocean is, there's only room for one surfer on each wave.

I can't believe it: she snakes a wave from me. We both paddle for it, both get it, but I'm closer to the breaking curl which according to surfing etiquette gives me the right of way. She's supposed to pull out and let me have the wave, but she doesn't. Instead, I have to pull out because she's in my way.

A little later, she does it again. This time I yell at her. Why is she competing for each wave when there's plenty for each of us?

When she does it a third time, I decide to try to maneuver around her instead of getting out. Our surfboards (both going in the same direction) chatter against each other, we lose our balance and both fall. When she comes up her face is twisted in pain and a strange kind of triumph: "You broke my rib."

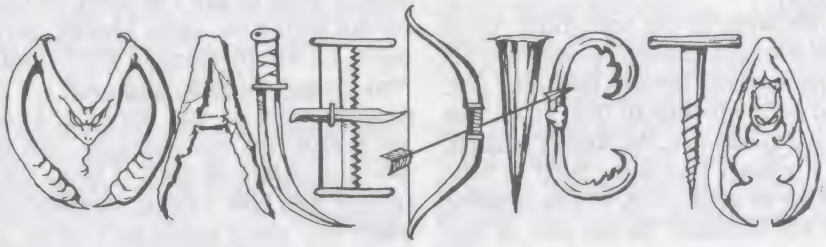
She's finally won, I think viciously. Now she's got something she can *really* hold against me.

Over the years I gradually turned her love and little-sister adulation into competitive rivalry and mistrust. I'd invent games in which she always lost; and when she lost, I didn't comfort her. She needed my love and I withheld it, exactly as I'd withheld the thing on the stair landing so many years ago. She needed my admiration and respect for her womanhood, and I withheld that, too—exactly as I withheld all recognition of those painful litle buds under her wet jersey. She needed to win, and I wouldn't let her. She wanted me to give her something, even if it was only a wave, and instead I broke her rib.

I'm sorry. I have no excuses for my behavior, except maybe to say that in our family love was in short supply. You competed for it, hoarded it, and didn't easily give your own away. Anyway, Mr. Apology himself has apologized in this magazine for his predatory behavior with women and devoted a whole section—the Church of the Apologetic Predator—to this kind of stuff. Flash of recognition! I hope my own apology might find a home there.

The first flash of recognition I felt in tallking to Mr. Apology about his shoplifting has, as I said, led to other things. He was one of my closest friends for twenty years. Together we moved from fairly reckless youth into fairly apologetic middle age—along with our ever-growing lists of things to apologize for. When he was alive, I never availed myself of the Line. It's hard to apologize even anonymously to one of your best friends, and he would have probably recognized my voice anyway. Now that he's gone—ironically killed by a hit-and-run jet ski operator who won't ever be able to use the Apology Line to say he's sorry—I find I don't want to be anonymous. I want to use my real name in the hope that my sister will read it and understand. And in the hope that my old friend, wherever he might be now, will get a kick out of it.

Of course, I could call my sister up or write her a letter, but that would be passing up my chance to take advantage of Mr. Apology's brilliant idea. This way it's not only public, but it's art. •



"Your statement declaring yourself part of the intelligentsia is refreshing coming from a washed- up drunk hippy..."
Shame.

"...And that man who was on there talking about how much he hated women...I hate him too..."
V.

"This new program has revealed a new crop of detractors. I had a very long and vituperative statement prepared, but after thinking about it, I decided why? Who am I railing against? To what end?... And to (name removed), I could insult you... but I suppose that having to go through life with the surname of probably one of the worst writers in the history of American literature (is punishment enough)."
Dr. Tonra.

"Your name-calling basically displays your mentality."
Abdullah Muhammed.

"There are a lot of misinformed people on this line."
Unidentified female caller.

"You're so stupid, you're funny... What did you think, that you were the only idiot out there? There are thousands of idiots just like you... You gotta whole lotta fuckin' nerve."
Tina.

"(name removed), you're a very unstable person, and you need help, and in the meanwhile, you need to shut the fuck up."
Craig.

"Fuck you (name removed), you fuckin' degenerate fuckin' drug addict piece of shit."
Unidentified male caller.

"... I apologize for calling you a dickhead."
B.W.

Compilation and artwork by the Zodiologist.

A selection of calls recorded on the Apology Line, compiled by Mr. Apology...

Apologies to the Deceased

Less Than Perfect

I want to tell you about my friend, Eric. He was great tennis player, a really great tennis player, and we were doubles partners. I was pretty good, too. This was around eighteen, nineteen years old. I lived in another state in the Midwest. We were ranked as doubles partners. We were really good— I'll get on with this story. [laughs]

We were in the semi-final round at the state tournament, which was, for us, quite a thrill. It was a really hot day. We'd been playing all day, and I was starting to feel sick. We started a match, and I guess I had some kind of heat disorder or something. It was messing with my stomach. To say this as discreetly as possible, I sort of had an accident in my clothes. I was feeling really sick, and I couldn't keep playing because I had pretty much shit my pants. [laughs]

The reason I'm telling you this is because Eric was really cool about it. He didn't give me any hassle and he didn't try to make me feel guilty for messing up the match. We had to forfeit, basically, because I was too sick to play. And I don't know if I just choked or— I really don't think that's what happened but...

Anyway, I just kind of want to mark this moment publicly that he was a great guy. He would think of other people; even if he was having hardship, he would still help you out.

It's funny... When I'm warming up to playing tennis, I think of it as being a very civil exercise. Warming up with someone, you're not trying to get the ball past, you're trying to give them a chance to hit the ball and warm up. So, if I accidentally hit a ball really well, not meaning to, and I hit it past the guy, I usually apologize for that. Sometimes you get into this kind of unconscious zone and you can't help but hit good shots, even if you don't want to. And so, I could spend half the warm-up time apologizing, saying, sorry, sorry, sorry. [laughs] At first I thought, that's sort of a half-hearted apology; it doesn't really mean anything, but then I started thinking, it means a lot. I'm sort of apologizing to the whole world for not being perfect, for not making things as smooth as I can conceive of.

Anyway, along those lines, in that vein, I want to say I'm sorry to Eric for not seeing the signs. I mean, obviously, he was planning to kill himself. You know, you look back, and it's so obvious what he was thinking. I can see it now. He was changing, and he was not feeling so good. I spent a lot of time with him. I mean, we practiced every day and I didn't pick up on it. He took his father's gun and he went into the shed in the backyard and he shot himself in the head.

Obviously, you know, you can't wrack yourself with guilt over something like that, but I should have seen it. I really should have. So, that's the story of Eric. It was long-winded and convoluted and unplanned.

Neglected Friend

I just found out that my friend died in the hospital of complications— He had AIDS and he couldn't eat any more and they couldn't put IV in his arm because his veins were too small, so he basically starved to death. I just want to apologize because I didn't go to visit him for about a month or maybe six weeks because it was hard, which is not an excuse. I feel stupid and I'm really sorry and I hope he forgives me.

Death Wish

I'd like to apologize for something I did a long time ago. I was really young and I was a rebellious age, and I was real rotten to my father and I did some real rotten things to him. I wished that he was dead a lot of time. I feel like a lot of people, like most people, that sometime in your life you get one wish and that wish comes true.

I wished my father was dead and then he died. I feel like that was my wish, and I'm so sorry about that. I guess I'll just have to live with that. I wish I'd never wished that. I'm so sorry I wished that. I hope that he knows that I'm sorry and that I love him. I don't know if the Apology Line reaches up there, but I'm real sorry I killed my father.

Stole Drug Money

I used to steal money out of my grandfather's—out of the side pocket of his pants all the time. He was such a sweet man, and he loved me so much, and I feel really guilty about it. I was doing a lot of drugs then, and I used to steal money all the time from him, constantly. I would take 50's and lots of 20's out his roll of bills. He always used to act like he didn't even notice it because he loved me so much.

He died a couple of years ago and I feel really, really guilty about it. I want to apologize to him. I think that in some small way he will hear and understand just how sorry I am. It was a horrible thing to do and it's bothered me ever since, so I want to apologize.

Tie Up Loose Ends

My father died last month before I had my chance to make my peace with him. I loved the man and I never got a chance to apologize to him. I don't believe that he's listening to any line right now, but maybe if people listen to this, they'll remember to apologize to the people they love.

I don't know. Maybe it's good to apologize to people directly rather than calling up some telephone line and apologizing to the world at large. Maybe they could talk to people so they wouldn't feel the same kind of guilt and grief that I'm feeling now. Really. It

makes sense to keep on an even keel, to tie up lose ends while you still have the chance to.

Take the Time

Um, I want to make an apology to someone who can't hear it, so I suppose I'll make it to the answering box instead. An ex-lover of mine just recently committed suicide. It happened two weeks after I was happily wed to my current lover. I can't help but think— We had a brief conversation before we got married, I and my ex-lover, and three weeks later or so I got a call from somebody saying she's dead.

She had no family in this country and her friends here in New York—she had recently moved to California—had just sort of passed the news around. There were no services offered or eulogies or even a get together in a wake kind of style. It was just a phone call on a Monday morning, and that was the end of her life and my relationship with it.

I feel that when I last spoke to her we didn't really cover enough of what needed to be covered, and that probably added to her depression and her ultimate demise. I'll never know. So, that being what it is, take the time to deal with it, next time, because sometimes time runs out..

Didn't Visit Mother

I want to apologize to my mother. She had cancer. Her best friend from her home town said she was taking treatments and she was pretty out of it. The doctor said that it was not going to get any better. She wouldn't know if I was there are or not, but her best friend told me that I should go and hold her hand and talk to her anyway, 'cause she would know, even though it didn't seem like she would know.

I didn't. I couldn't stand to stay there. I should apologize to her friend, too, because I told her that I did.

Extorted Mother

I want to apologize for something... Maybe, I guess it's too late to apologize for it, but I want to apologize for it now. My mother was bedridden for a while and she couldn't get out of bed. She had to get social security and welfare, and I was too old for it. They didn't include me and I had no job and no way of making money. When she was hungry or thirsty I used to make her give me money to give her a drink, like she'd have to give me five dollars for a glass of water, ten dollars for a sandwich and... Now she's passed away and I can't say I'm sorry to her 'cause what I did was probably the most horrible thing in the world. I'll never be able to say I'm sorry to her. I hope I go hell and burn there for this because it wasn't right, and if there's somewhere she can hear me, I just want to tell her I'm sorry.

Forgot Flowers

I'd like to apologize for not putting flowers on my mother's grave on Mother's Day. I ran out of time and I couldn't get to the cemetary. I'd like to apologize to her. I know if she were looking down at me, she'd understand, I guess. I haven't had much money lately, but I really meant to do something about going over there and putting some flowers on her grave.

Defiled Grave

I want to apologize for something that I did the other day. At the time I was really happy about doing it, but now I've thought about it and it's really bumming the shit out of me.

My father died about three years ago, and he was a real scumbag. We really argued and shit. I wouldn't say I was glad to see him him die, but in some ways afterwards... I really hated him for a lot of shit that went down between us.

The other day I went to the cemetary to visit the grave site. I wasn't drunk or anything, but I took out my penis and I urinated all over the headstone. I thought it was just great, just pissing on top of him, but now I feel really shitty about it and I just wanted to call up and say, "I'm sorry.

Mr. A Misses Friend

Around the same time you made this call, I learned that an old artist friend of mine had committed suicide. And we were tight for a long time, but we had a falling out not long after I started the Apology Line, so I haven't really seen him much for the last eight or nine years. However, now that I've learned he's dead, I think about him all the time. He keeps popping into my thoughts and I keep remembering all these crazy incidents and I realize he was very influential—of all my friends in my adult life, he was the one who would constantly dare me to do strange and different things. I realize that he was a very important influence on me, and now all of a sudden he's gone, but he's come alive in my thoughts.

I Will See You

I also know how it feels to have someone kill themselves; and how it feels to have someone die of natural causes, someone that I loved and cared about; and also someone who died a violent death other than suicide, and that was my cousin. I loved him very, very deeply, but I had not seen him in quite some time. The pain that I'm still going through because of his death is very deep and very sorrowful because I haven't told him in a long time that I loved him.

I thought he was one of the most special people that ever walked the face of this Earth. He was like a big Teddy Bear to me. He knew—he felt the pain, too—of what I was going through.

I just hope and pray to God that he died instantly and felt none of the pain that I think he might have. He was a beautiful person and I feel very angry at times that God took him away from me.

I will see you in many years. I hope he is there to greet me when eventually I do die, because he is one of the first faces that I would like to see when I get there. That would make me very happy.

Cursed by Mother

For the person who sat there pouring out his guilt over experiences he had a long time ago. Well, I know something about guilt, and the only thing you can do with real guilt, is to try to find a way to live with it, and to try and transcend it.

As for myself, well, I got know no name for this line. A long time ago, when I was kid, my mom got cancer and I found that with her laying in the hospital, I really didn't have the kind of psychological strength necessary to hang around and watch. I used all kinds of wonderful psychological avoidance strategies. It came that I actually forgot where my mother was until finally, all of the emotions that one associates with one's mother would build up in me and I'd go visit her.

On one of those visits while she was lying there in great pain, she cursed

me. It wasn't one of those supersitious sort of witchy curse things, it was simply she accused me of being a bad son. She chose something that I've always found it tough to live with, since that day, and it's been over a decade. I somehow think that this thing has informed and somehow destroyed my life. I really do believe that I have some talents at various things but it's hard to try to live up to what I can do, it's hard to live with the desire to constantly overcompensate. I know that even if I reach the pinnacle of my profession, which is writing, that it just wouldn't feel like enough.

It's an interesting thing to be able to call Apology, because I don't believe in God. Yet the device of confession is, well, it is useful. You can't really confess to your friends. You confide in your friends and you confess to strangers or people who must remain strangers under the model under which we grew up—I had a brief and painful experience with Catholicism in my childhood. So, it's good to think that there's some sort of community of strangers, a group of people out there, whom I will never meet.

Forgive Yourself

I just wanted to leave a message for the writer who felt guilty about his mother who died of cancer. Well, she died a long time ago, and I think that maybe he might be taking it too seriously. When someone's dying their emotions aren't exactly super-moderate. Shit, that's just a raw rage.

I grew up with my mother dying of cancer, and it was sort of comical after a while. It's kind of sick to say, but after a while— There are so many times when my mother would say, "You don't love me any more," and then she'd be real friendly. She'd switch on and off.

Everybody does the best they can at the time, and if your compassion, if your ability to cope, is taxed past the point where you can help anyone else, that's the result of the disease. You are crippled by your environment and, you have to accept that.

When the body is dying, the mind is dying as well, and the capacity to judge with a critical distance, another person, is very hard. You have to forgive yourself, not even in that hokey, we're-all-beautiful way, and that crap, 'cause that's just bullshit. If you're a jerk or something than you're a jerk. But, just because you were there, just because your mother went through that and you were a part of that family, a part of that chain, that doesn't give you the right to be a jerk in any other facet of your life. We all have our own baggage with us.

But, I really think that for you to enjoy your success, it's not even forgiving yourself—because there's nothing to forgive—it's just sort of understanding, it's not so much you, as it was your mother. Her capacity to understand things was limited.

I really hope that, you know, without the aid of the holistic crap—there's so many ways that people can drain you of your beliefs and your hope—you can just have the faith to go on and be good at what you want to be, and that is obviously to touch other people and to communicate. Maybe your job is to uncurse the other ones who are cursed like you, in your own mind, in your own soul, just as I felt cursed, and I thought that I was unworthy for so many reasons. Obviously, by the Apology Line, I hope I can get through to you, and for whatever it's worth, on a scrap of tape in some loft in Soho or whatever. I hope to God it gets across to you, in the oddest conversation I've ever had. Take care.

From the Grave

This is for the gentleman who is having problems with his life and is blaming his problems on his father, the lack of love from his father. He said that the only way he can deal with that lack of love is after his father dies. Believe me, it is worse after he dies, because you stop all opportunity to at least make amends. The number that they do on you from the grave is unbelievable.

You can't talk back to them. You get the feeling that they can't hear you. They're in your brain. They talk to you through your mind. The things that they've said, throughout your entire life, just your general memories, are so much more difficult to deal with after they're dead.

And may I suggest that you come to grips with your own life. Do not put the blame on your father for the lack of his love. A method to get rid of this, these feelings, and to go on with your life, is to write your father a letter expressing your anger and in essense forgiving him for just being a human being. He has the right to choose to love who he wants to love. A father's love is a conditional love. A mother's love is unconditional, but a father's love is definitely a conditional love.

Once you write this letter, rip it up, burn it in an ashtray, get that anger out of your system, let those unwanted love feelings from your father go up with the smoke, let the past relationship with your father go up in smoke. Start with a clean slate from your end. His end is going to remain the same. Change your end. You're an adult, you can forgive. How long can you hold a grudge?

Still Blames Father

A father's love is conditional? Bullshit! He's as responsible for his son as the son's mother. Write your father a letter and tell him how much you hate him? Absolutely, that's what I did, and I sent it to him! If he doesn't want to read it, if he wants to destroy it himself, that's up to him, but it should be out in the open, absolutely.

I attempt to have as little as possible to do with him, and I do just basically wait for his death. I know exactly what the guy is talking about and I don't care if he talks to me from the grave. It wouldn't be any different than I've heard all my life, so what's the dif'? At least it wouldn't be as loud.

Failed Sister

I'm calling to apologize to my sister, Victoria, my angel, Vickie, who killed herself this Fall. I'm calling to apologize to her for not being there, for not giving her whatever she needed, for not being the reason that she could go on, and for not being her brother when she needed me the most. I wish you were here. I'm sorry, and I miss you, and I want you back. I love you more than anything, and I'm so really and deeply sorry. I feel that I failed you. I know we all did. I just want you to rest well, and I hope you've found peace. Your brother misses you, Vickie.

Not Your Fault

For the man who lost his sister to suicide, and apologized for not being her reason for living, you know you can't be someone else's reason for living, and you know that you're not the reason that happened. She was sick and she died of her sickness and it had nothing to do with you. ●

IN MEMORIAM, continued from page 25

Snapshots

"Daisy Vining"
Friend, Caller and Project Staff

After awhile of being obsessed with the Apology Line, I did meet Mr. Apology, through a mutual friend. I felt the connection between us to be more deep and amazing over the Line, in the space there, than supposedly to know him personally (I said supposedly, because I doubt, somehow, anyone of us can truly be "known"). Anyway. I loved discussing the Line with him. His sly, but out-there sense of humor and deep intelligence made him become one of the most dear people in the world to me in, seemingly, a very short time. A few incidences stand out in my mind.

We went to make copies at a copy store. All the machines, but one, were broken down. There was a long line. We talked intensely while waiting in line. After a long wait he became restless. I rattled on about death. I said, "You know we all have just a set number of minutes in life. We never know when will be our last minute. We go through life with the sensation of immortality. For this reason I always make sure I enjoy standing in line." Again, another one of those looks. (He had given me a similar one when I had announced, over a meal at a '50s style diner, "The religion of the future, that will satisfy modern people, has not yet arisen.") We both looked at each other. He sort of smiled. I can't be sure now, as if to say what. I remember looking out the window at the sunshine and entertaining briefly the possibility either one of us could die soon. "Oh no, that wouldn't really happen" I had assumed. One really doesn't think it is possible.

Last moment. He takes Tahnee out to walk and I'm going home. When we get on the street there's a woman loading the trunk of a car who gets enraptured with the dog. For some reason I'm paying a lot of attention to what is going on. I ask myself, "What is it about this moment? This is an ordinary moment. Nothing's happening. Why is everything standing out, so vivid, like in slow motion." Nothing special. I looked very closely. Nothing's going on. "Why am I paying so much attention to this? Weird." I looked at everything very closely to try to figure out why I was paying so much attention to everything. There was a palpable luminosity to the moment. I was conscious of myself, for some reason, looking at everything. I was conscious of looking out through my eyes at the ordinary scene. Everything stood out, as if in high relief. The litter on the street. The gray sidewalk. The woman petting Tahnee. Everything seemed in a state of suspended animation . I looked at Mr. Apology's face. He seemed distracted and normal. The moment stretches. Hangs in there. I remember it engraving itself on me. Just there with him, in the moment. But I didn't at the time know why.Turns out that moment was the last. But I've figured it out, G-d must have allowed me my good-bye.

Sometimes future events must impinge on the present. When Mr. Apology left for Hampton Bays, on Friday August 4, he didn't leave the Apology Line up and running. As far as anyone remembers to whom I have spoken, this had never happened before.

I don't believe Allan's story is about tragedy,though it is a tragedy for us. (What's really a tragedy, I'm sorry to say, is the way most people live.) Allan accomplished a good life and did his part, in very great measure, to alleviate the sufferings of scores of people. Our society will romanticize tragedy and be drawn to it, because we sense the trouble we're in and are paralyzed to change. So perversely we idolize, and are fascinated by, tragedy.

Allan's life, however, was not that way. He did what needed to be done. And asked the questions of life that needed to be asked, not necessarily by the artist, but by the true human being. Though his work examined the 'other' in society, it was, first and foremost, about ourselves. We cannot fathom the mysteries within ourselves. Allan's work and way of life was an act of defiance and encounter toward those things which cannot be understood about life and about human nature. He liked to do risky things because he liked to defy death. He wanted his art to immortalize him, because he wanted to defy death. He didn't, thank God, idolize it. Apology is an examination of the matrix of life. This examination takes courage and chutzpah. The spirit of his life and what he taught by example, is a continuing blessing. •

Mark Stevens

Art Critic and Apology Line Caller

I admired the Apology Line because it was as boring, and as exciting, as a village. It presented a wonderful array of human "types": the charlatan, the pedant. the saint, the show-off, the vulgarian, the victim, the priest, the joker, the flirt, the hater, the friend, the braggart, the fool, the bore, the poseur, the criminal, the gossip. To name just a few. This was useful because most people in New York live too narrowly, knowing only people very much like themselves. And art, unfortunately, no longer has the Dickensian appetite for human character.

I also admired the Apology Line because, occasionally and unpredictably, a voice would spill over into poetry. There were times when I though "A playwright would kill for this."

On the Apology Line intimacy was immediate but distant, visceral but abstract. That is often intimacy's form today.

I was sometimes moved by a phantom community that did not fit smoothly into contemporary life. There was pathos in the way so many voices sought something they were unable to find. The Apology Line was a Babel and a Lonely Souls Club.

Mr. Apology himself was a classical "type". He was the man in the village whom almost everyone trusts. He was the open ear, the fair minded brother, the shepherd with time, the figure whom others come to in the hope of resolving disputes.

As an artist, he has created a telling group portrait. •

Over the years some pretty strange characters have called the Apology Line. *Repeatedly*. The question on everyone's mind is, "What the hell do these people look like, anyway?"

In order to help you visualize these personalities, we enlisted some cartoonists and illustrators. If you happen to be one of those caricatured, remember that these portraits are from the artists' imaginations only, even if the resemblance is uncanny!

Apology Rogue's Gallery

Natalie by John Tearhorst

V (94-95): A seemingly scatter-brained metaphysician. However, if you can wade through the voodoo you'll find a good heart and good advice. Was a champion of Sam from beginning to end.

V by Tony Millionaire

NATALIE (93-95):A Brooklynite who had an opinion about absolutely everything... usually a bad opinion, a lot of opinions. Reluctant, but vehement bigot.

ANNETTE (95): AKA Bam-Bam. The Dusthead. Lurks around the Limelight and other goth haunts smoking chemically impossible substances. The Mistress Elvira of the Apology Line. Left a harrowing tale of rape on the line. Why do I get the feeling everything in this caller's life is harrowing?

Annette by Mr. Cartoonist

PORKY (93-95): AKA Porkita, etc. A misogynist and a boor. Make that bore. No matter how many times he vowed to clean up his act or was flamed off the line, he just kept popping back up. Cranked out personalities like link sausages. Needs professional help.

Porky by Mr. Cartoonist

Porky by The Zodiologist

VAMPY (95): A young mother who stalks New York's subterranean landscape in search of blood, but would settle for a warm body. She often called to regale us with tales from the darkside, also known as Queens.

Vampy by Danny Hellman

The Puppy Fucker by Sam Henderson

THE PUPPY FUCKER (84-93): Originally called to discuss his prediliction for adopting stray puppies and sexually abusing them. Revealed that as hoax. After a period of near inactivity, save for the occassional right-wing rant, hacked the Apology Line in '92, spouting his opinions over other callers' statements.

MARK (94-95): The Sir Galahad of the Predators. A restless, but compelling Christian. Mr. Apology would play him country music...

Mark by P. Reeves

Margot by Anne D. Bernstein

MARGOT (90-94): Earth mother and voice of compassion. The kindest Apologist. Usually commented on matters of the heart and sexual subjects.

"Zodiac" by Andrea Dunham

"ZODIAC" (81-84): Called purporting to be the infamous Northern California hunter of humans. Later revealed self as hoaxer, along with co-conspirator Zodiologist. Sure did know a lot about the real Zodiac though...

Hard Times by The Zodiologist

HARD TIMES (81-83): Significator and boaster. Possible gangbanger. Reminded callers that when they ran into him they were in for "hard times". Possibly also the voice of "Motherfucker" on the Uncut Gems tape.

Hard Times by Mr. Cartoonist

More Kooks and Callers
(Not Pictured)

DR. TONRA: The man who would be king. Not known for his phoneside manner. Ready and willing to educate the masses, forcibly if necessary. Hates all things P.C. He has proved through random acts of kindness that beneath the bluster is a fellow human being trying to get out.

SAM (94-95): The Apology Line's Cause Celebre. An actress with an asshole for a husband. Her touching tale of abuse and woe affected all of us deeply. As of printing, she is still with her husband, and thankfully, alive.

TG: A very sad and lonely woman. Think Eleanor Rigby. She used the Apology Line as one would a therapist. She left her number on the Line for anyone who wanted to call her and through some bizarre twist of fate ended up with Porky (see next page) for a pal.

THE GORE GIRL (94): Scab-pickin' Manson-lovin' rreak o' nature. A real American.

OTTO (93-95): The Tabboo Breaker. Claimed to have had sex with his sister, and not infrequently. Also claimed to have enjoyed it. Alot. Apparently the kink value worn thin after a while so he began strangling her during sex. Hope they don't breed...

C.M. (92-94): The Child Molester. His conquests included his niece, aged 7 and various prison inmates. Methinks he and Otto would have made a lovely couple.

SHAME (94-95): The Prodigy of Apology. A recent caller who idolized Mr. A., stepped into the breach after his death to run the Line. A kinder, gentler caller than most.

NATASHA (94-95): Intelligent, articulate, funny and sometimes pissed off (but al ways for a good reason). The High Priestess of the Church of the Apologetic Predator and champion of the latest Predator Flame War. And what a voice...

The Church of the Apologetic Predator

Compiled by "The Zodiologist"

Artwork by Mrs. Cartoonist.

Postulate: An"Apologetic Predator" is a person who recognizes that existence requires the consumption or displacement of other living things; that because this condition is universal and unavoidable it is not a sin and at the same time it is the root of all evil.— Mr. A

The Church of the Apologetic Predator was a more recent feature of the Apology Line. This is where callers spoke of religious or metaphysical issues. Discussions could take months to unfold, and could range in topic from Camus and Zen Buddhism to pinball and Mr. Apology's country music collection. We believe that this section became one of Mr. A's favorite sections. The following are excerpts from the last Apology Line program (with the exception of Mr. A's comment, which is from program 211).

Ricky from Bay Ridge: This morning I walked past the church I used to attend, and though it's normal to bless yourself when you walk past a church, I didn't feel like it. I don't have any reason not to go to church anymore, but with everything that's going on in my life, I can't do it. I have too many questions.

Morgan: I recently learned a lot about a new model to explain reality. It's that reality is either implicate or explicate...that is, either enfolded or unfolded. Think about some small society, isolated from the rest of the world. Some missionaries come upon them and they can't understand each other. Reality would in this case be enfolded. Anytime we meet somebody, we don't know what they're like, what they see. We slowly unfold reality, we slowly learn more and more. We approach reality through comparisons, but we have no relationship to reality itself. If we can't see the implicate order of the universe, how can we claim to know reality? We have to keep searching...but nothing is absolute.

Mark: Although I'm a Christian or at least try to be one, I have a confession to make. I sometimes don't really believe in my heart some of the things I say about an all-loving God. My own dark side is deeply cynical. I'm positive that I truly believe that there is a creative intelligence behind this world, but sometimes I think that it's not very loving, but is in fact very harsh, very judgmental and very cruel. My path is to seek meaning in this. I think that you and I and everyone needs to seek meaning...

The real message of the Book of Job is that everyone suffers as a consequence of being human, but that the response to this suffering is everything...

I think that to seek meaning in life one must have an avocation. I like the idea of the amateur scientist - a person who wraps himself in the study of a subject. One of the things I regret (now that I'm old enough to have regrets) is that I never un-reservedly and whole-heartedly committed myself to anything. I think that there's a virtue in single-mindedness. You really gotta push that rock...

Female Caller: Mark, you say you have to commit yourself whole-heartedly and that single-mindedness is a virtue. Isn't this the toehold of most religions? If you put the blinders on, and you see only what *they* want you to see, then you're sort of like fooled into it.

Jim: I have no problem with spiritual Christians. The Christianity most of us are exposed to is institutional. Normally when you talk to believers, there is no longer any reason for them to seek...not necessarily meaning, because they think the meaning is always there, we just choose to ignore it. There's a species of belief that lends itself to an openness and a quest, and there's another species that denies validity to anything *but* what that belief ascribes to.

Karen: Maybe we're created by God - but what is our purpose? Are we just ants in an ant farm on His mantel?

G: Not everyone who believes in God believes that God is omnipotent. I have a vision that God may have started everything, but that doesn't mean that God knows what he was doing. There's a struggle to make this universe work... God is always learning.

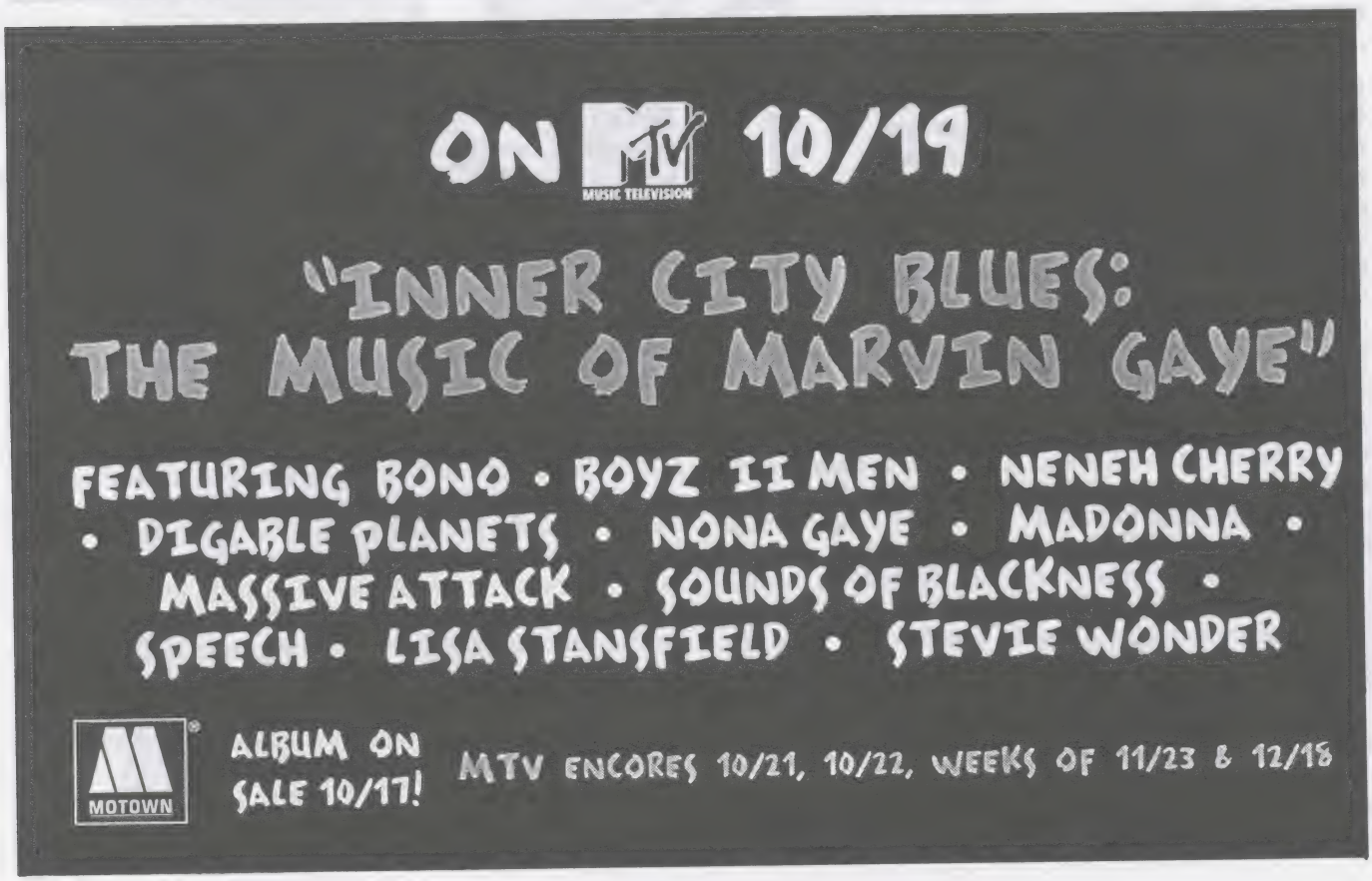
There's a difference between the political nature of religions and the very different personal experiences that people have had. There are cosmologies proposed by people who have had direct experiences of God. My concept of God may seem to be odd to you, because it's got a feminine principle and other different parts of God.

Female Caller: Isn't religion just something we cling to? Isn't it funny that we just can't accept that we're *here*...that Mom and Dad had a fun night in the back seat of the car? With opinions like this, I've sent people running from my living room, telling me they were going to pray for me.

Vampy: I believe *this* is hell. I believe we live in hell.

Mr. Apology: I was not brought up to pray at home. When I was in elementary school, we would say a school prayer, either before or after pledging allegiance to the flag, I forget which. It was part of the morning routine, and I was always uncomfortable about it, because I wasn't brought up that way, and I didn't feel much faith. And I'd look around, and I'd feel like one of the odd people out. Since no one wants to incur the wrath of one's peers, I'd sort of go along with it, but I would not be praying. Sometimes I'd say things to myself silently, like "OK God, if you're out there, make a sign!", or if I screwed up my courage I'd say "OK God, if you're out there, strike me dead now. Go ahead. I dare you." Of course nothing happened.

I also remember that in one class we took turns in leading the class in the Lord's Prayer, and when it was my turn, I couldn't remember the words, even though I'd said it five thousand times. Eventually the teacher said, "Oh, I guess we're having a silent prayer today". •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FEATURING BONO • BOYZ II MEN • NENEH CHERRY
• DIGABLE PLANETS • NONA GAYE • MADONNA •
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Apology, P.O.B. 20065 Greeley Square Station, New York NY 10001-0001

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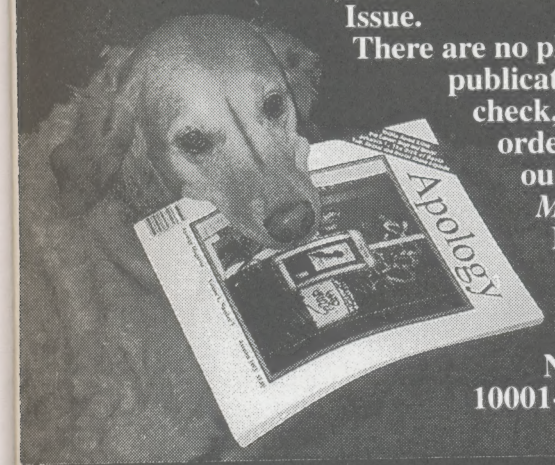
The act of confession and apology is itself a creative act: an attempt to find meaning in the restructuring of one's experience into a moral tale. Only by finding a moral can one turn the page and move on.
—Mr. Apology

Back Issues and Tapes?

Apology Magazine is no longer accepting subscriptions. However, back issues and tapes are available. An Apology Project "Archival" package is $72, including postage, and consists of a full set of ten issues, and the cassette tape,"Uncut Gems from Year Zero, a compilation of the best messages from the first two years. Three of the back issues are no longer available in first printing. Xerox copies will be sent in lieu of originals for Vol.1 #2, Vol.1 #3, and Vol.2#1. Single back issues of the magazine are available for $8.00 each. The "Uncut Gems" tape is $15.00. Issues currently available are: Vol.1 #1, Vol.1 #4, Vol.2 #2, Vol.2 #3, (Vol.2 #4 was not published), Vol.3 #1, Vol. 3 #2, and Vol.3 #3, the Memorial Issue.



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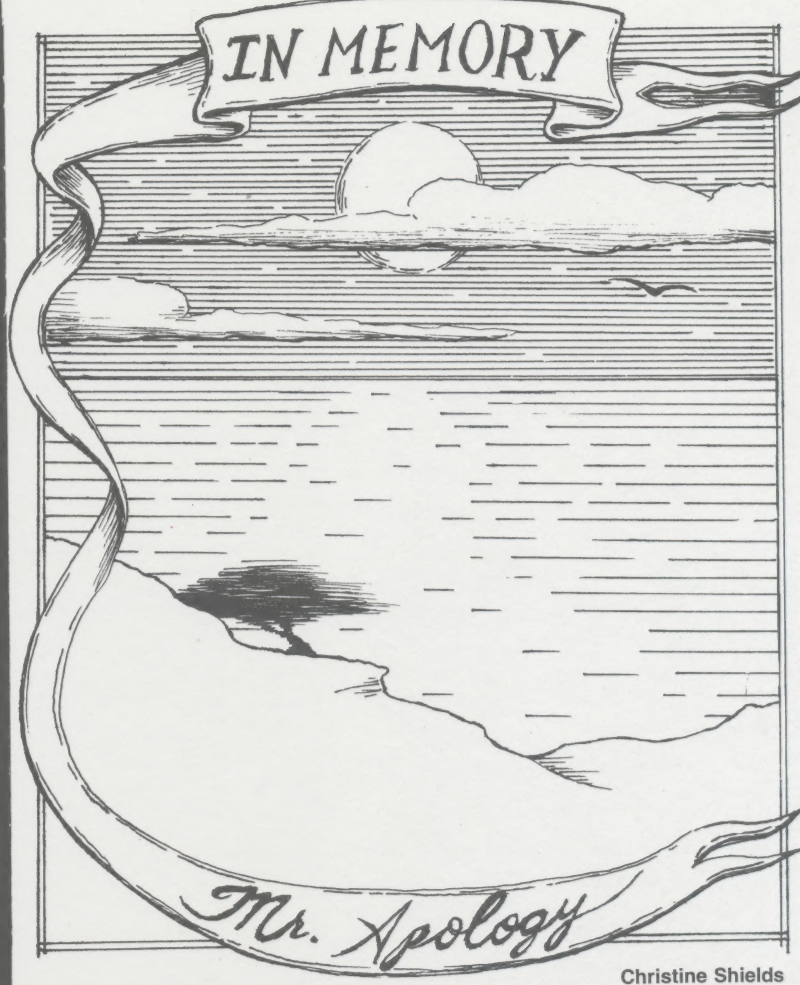

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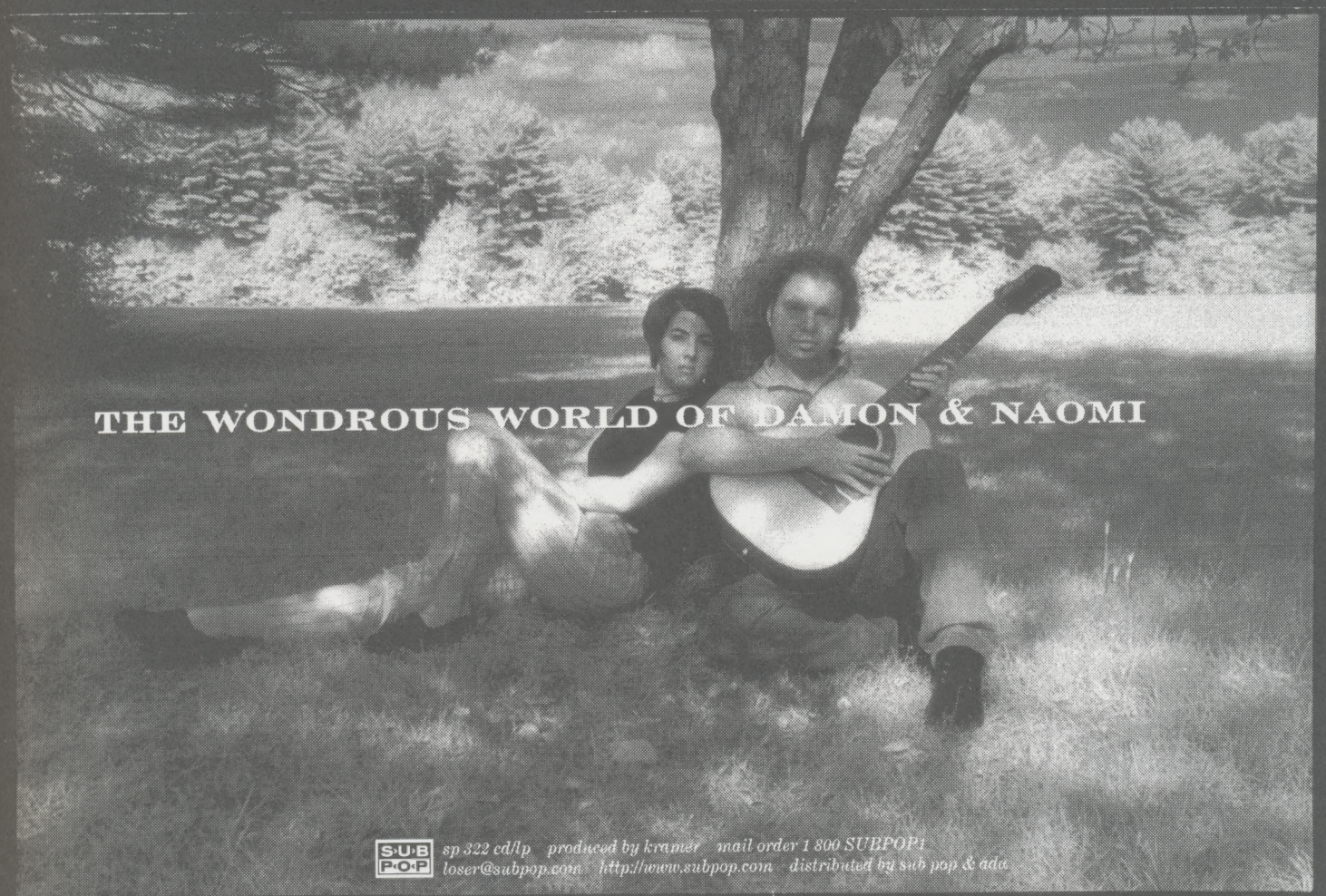
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